



ENGLISH AND AMERICAN LITERATURE

PART FOURTEEN

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ENGLISH AND AMERICAN LITERATURE

A CORRESPONDENCE COURSE IN LITERARY CRITICISM, INTER- PRETATION AND HISTORY

By C. H. SYLVESTER

*Formerly Professor of Literature and
Pedagogy in the State Normal
School at Stevens
Point, Wis.*

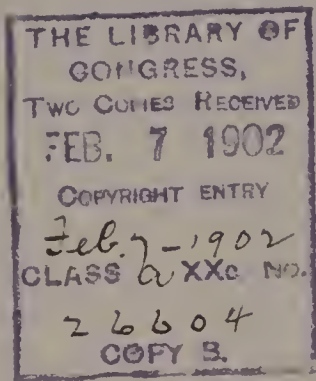
INCLUDING NUMEROUS
MASTERPIECES

IN EIGHTEEN PARTS
PART FOURTEEN,
THE LITERARY POWERS

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Part Fourteen

The Literary Powers

(Continued)

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The Cricket on the Hearth
(Concluded)

CHARLES DICKENS

The Cricket on the Hearth

(Continued from Part XIII)

The Carrier had expected that Tackleton would pay him an early visit; and he was right. He had not walked to and fro before his own door, many minutes, when he saw the Toy-merchant coming in his chaise along the road. As the chaise drew nearer, he perceived that Tackleton was dressed out sprucely for his marriage, and that he had decorated his horse's head with flowers and favors.

The horse looked much more like a bridegroom than Tackleton, whose half-closed eye was more disagreeably expressive than ever. But the Carrier took little heed of this. His thoughts had other occupation.

“John Peerybingle!” said Tackleton, with an air of condolence. “My good fellow, how do you find yourself this morning?”

“I have had but a poor night, Master Tackleton,” returned the Carrier shaking his head: “for I have been a good deal disturbed in my mind. But it's over now! Can you

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spare me half an hour or so, for some private talk ? ”

“ I came on purpose,” returned Tackleton, alighting.

“ Never mind the horse. He’ll stand quiet enough, with the reins over this post, if you’ll give him a mouthful of hay.”

The Carrier having brought it from his stable, and set it before him, they turned into the house.

“ You are not married before noon ? ” he said, “ I think ? ”

“ No,” answered Tackleton. “ Plenty of time. Plenty of time.”

When they entered the kitchen, Tilly Slowboy was rapping at the Stranger’s door; which was only removed from it by a few steps. One of her very red eyes (for Tilly had been crying all night long, because her mistress cried) was at the keyhole; and she was knocking very loud; and seemed frightened.

“ If you please I can’t make nobody hear,” said Tilly, looking round. “ I hope nobody an’t gone and been and died if you please ! ”

This philanthropic wish, Miss Slowboy emphasized with various new raps and kicks at the door; which led to no result whatever.

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“Shall I go?” said Tackleton. “It’s curious.”

The Carrier who had turned his face from the door, signed to him to go if he would.

So Tackleton went to Tilly Slowboy’s relief; and he too kicked and knocked; and he too failed to get the least reply. But he thought of trying the handle of the door; and as it opened easily, he peeped in, looked in, went in, and soon came running out again.

“John Peerybingle,” said Tackleton, in his ear. “I hope there has been nothing — nothing rash in the night?”

The Carrier turned upon him quickly.

“Because he’s gone!” said Tackleton; “and the window’s open. I don’t see any marks — to be sure it’s almost on a level with the garden: but I was afraid there might have been some — some scuffle. Eh?”

He nearly shut up the expressive eye altogether; he looked at him so hard. And he gave his eye, and his face, and his whole person, a sharp twist. As if he would have screwed the truth out of him.

“Make yourself easy,” said the Carrier. “He went into that room last night, without harm in word or deed from me, and no one has

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entered it since. He is away of his own free will. I'd go out gladly at that door, and beg my bread from house to house, for life, if I could so change the past that he had never come. But he has come and gone. And I have done with him !”

“Oh !—Well, I think he has got off pretty easy,” said Tackleton, taking a chair.

The sneer was lost upon the Carrier, who sat down too, and shaded his face with his hand, for some little time, before proceeding.

“You showed me last night,” he said at length, “my wife; my wife that I love; secretly—”

“And tenderly,” insinuated Tackleton.

“Conniving at that man's disguise, and giving him opportunities of meeting her alone. I think there's no sight I wouldn't have rather seen than that. I think there's no man in the world I wouldn't have rather had to show it me.”

“I confess to having had my suspicions always,” said Tackleton. “And that has made me objectionable here I know.”

“But as you did show it me,” pursued the Carrier, not minding him; “and as you saw her, my wife, my wife that I love”—his voice

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and eye, and hand, grew steadier and firmer as he repeated these words: evidently in pursuance of a steadfast purpose — “as you saw her at this disadvantage, it is right and just that you should also see with my eyes, and look into my breast, and know what my mind is, upon the subject. For it’s settled,” said the Carrier, regarding him attentively. “And nothing can shake it now.”

Tackleton muttered a few general words of assent, about its being necessary to vindicate something or other; but he was overawed by the manner of his companion. Plain and unpolished as it was, it had a something dignified and noble in it, which nothing but the soul of generous honor dwelling in the man could have imparted.

“I am a plain, rough man,” pursued the Carrier, “with very little to recommend me. I am not a clever man, as you very well know. I am not a young man. I love my little Dot, because I had seen her grow up, from a child, in her father’s house; because I knew how precious she was; because she had been my life, for years and years. There’s many men I can’t compare with, who never could have loved my little Dot like me, I think!”

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He paused, and softly beat the ground a short time with his foot, before resuming.

“I often thought that though I wasn’t good enough for her, I should make her a kind husband, and perhaps know her value better than another; and in this way I reconciled it to myself, and came to think it might be possible that we should be married. And in the end it came about, and we *were* married.”

“Hah!” said Tackleton, with a significant shake of the head.

“I had studied myself; I had had experience of myself; I knew how much I loved her, and how happy I should be,” pursued the Carrier. “But I had not—I feel it now—sufficiently considered her.”

“To be sure,” said Tackleton. “Giddiness, frivolity, fickleness, love of admiration! Not considered! All left out of sight! Hah!”

“You had best not interrupt me,” said the Carrier, with some sternness, “till you understand me; and you’re wide of doing so. If, yesterday, I’d have struck that man down at a blow, who dared to breathe a word against her, to-day I’d set my foot upon his face, if he was my brother!”

The Toy-merchant gazed at him in astonishment. He went on in a softer tone:

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“ Did I consider,” said the Carrier, “ that I took her — at her age, and with her beauty — from her young companions, and the many scenes of which she was the ornament, in which she was the brightest little star that ever shone, to shut her up from day to day in my dull house, and keep my tedious company ? Did I consider how little suited I was to her sprightly humor, and how wearisome a plodding man like me must be, to one of her quick spirit ? Did I consider that it was no merit in me, or claim in me, that I loved her, when everybody must, who knew her ? Never. I took advantage of her hopeful nature and her cheerful disposition ; and I married her. I wish I never had ! For her sake ; not for mine ! ” The Toy-merchant gazed at him, without winking. Even the half-shut eye was open now.

“ Heaven bless her ! ” said the Carrier, “ for the cheerful constancy with which she tried to keep the knowledge of this from me ! And Heaven help me, that, in my slow mind, I have not found it out before ! Poor child ! Poor Dot ! *I* not to find it out, who have seen her eyes fill with tears, when such a marriage as our own was spoken of ! I, who have seen the secret trembling on her

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lips a hundred times, and never suspected it till last night ! Poor girl ! That I could ever hope she would be fond of me ! That I could ever believe she was ! ”

“ She made a show of it,” said Tackleton. “ She made such a show of it, that to tell you the truth it was the origin of my misgivings.”

And here he asserted the superiority of May Fielding, who certainly made no sort of show of being fond of *him*.

“ She has tried,” said the poor Carrier, with greater emotion than he had exhibited yet ; “ I only now begin to know how hard she has tried, to be my dutiful and zealous wife. How good she has been ; how much she has done ; how brave and strong a heart she has ; let the happiness I have known under this roof bear witness ! It will be some help and comfort to me, when I am here alone.”

“ Here alone ? ” said Tackleton. “ Oh ! Then you do mean to take some notice of this ? ”

“ I mean,” returned the Carrier, “ to do her the greatest kindness, and make her the best reparation, in my power. I can release her from the daily pain of an unequal marriage, and the struggle to conceal it. She shall be as free as I can render her.”

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“Make *her* reparation !” exclaimed Tackleton, twisting and turning his great ears with his hands. “There must be something wrong here. You didn’t say that, of course.”

The Carrier set his grip upon the collar of the Toy-merchant, and shook him like a reed.

“Listen to me !” he said. “And take care that you hear me right. Listen to me. Do I speak plainly ?”

“Very plainly indeed,” answered Tackleton.

“As if I meant it ?”

“Very much as if you meant it.”

“I sat upon that hearth, last night, all night,” exclaimed the Carrier. “On the spot where she has often sat beside me, with her sweet face looking into mine. I called up her whole life, day by day. I had her dear self, in its every passage, in review before me. And upon my soul she is innocent, if there is One to judge the innocent and guilty !”

Staunch Cricket on the Hearth ! Loyal household Fairies !

“Passion and distrust have left me !” said the Carrier ; “and nothing but my grief remains. In an unhappy moment some old lover, better suited to her tastes and years than I ; forsaken, perhaps, for me, against her will ; returned. In an unhappy moment,

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taken by surprise, and wanting time to think of what she did, she made herself a party to his treachery, by concealing it. Last night she saw him, in the interview we witnessed. It was wrong. But otherwise than this she is innocent if there is truth on earth !”

“If that is your opinion”—Tackleton began.

“So, let her go !” pursued the Carrier. “Go, with my blessing for the many happy hours she has given me, and my forgiveness for any pang she has caused me. Let her go, and have the peace of mind I wish her ! She’ll never hate me. She’ll learn to like me better, when I’m not a drag upon her, and she wears the chain I have riveted, more lightly. This is the day on which I took her, with so little thought for her enjoyment, from her home. To-day she shall return to it, and I will trouble her no more. Her father and mother will be here to-day—we had made a little plan for keeping it together—and they shall take her home. I can trust her, there, or anywhere. She leaves me without blame, and she will live so I am sure. If I should die—I may perhaps while she is still young ; I have lost some courage in a few hours—

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she'll find that I remembered her, and loved her to the last! This is the end of what you showed me. Now, it's over!"

"O no, John, not over. Do not say it's over yet! Not quite yet. I have heard your noble words. I could not steal away pretending to be ignorant of what has affected me with such deep gratitude. Do not say it's over, 'till the clock has struck again!"

She had entered shortly after Tackleton, and had remained there. She never looked at Tackleton, but fixed her eyes upon her husband. But she kept away from him, setting as wide a space as possible between them; and though she spoke with most impassioned earnestness, she went no nearer to him even then. How different in this from her old self!

"No hand can make the clock which will strike again for me the hours that are gone," replied the Carrier, with a faint smile. "But let it be so, if you will, my dear. It will strike soon. It's of little matter what we say. I'd try to please you in a harder case than that."

"Well!" muttered Tackleton. I must be off, for when the clock strikes again, it'll

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be necessary for me to be upon my way to church. Good-morning, John Perrybingle. I'm sorry to be deprived of the pleasure of your company. Sorry for the loss, and the occasion of it too ! ”

“ I have spoken plainly ? ” said the Carrier, accompanying him to the door.

“ Oh quite ! ”

“ And you'll remember what I have said ? ”

“ Why, if you compel me to make the observation,” said Tackleton, previously taking the precaution of getting into his chaise; “ I must say that it was so very unexpected, that I'm far from being likely to forget it.”

“ The better for us both,” returned the Carrier. “ Good-by. I give you joy ! ”

“ I wish I could give it to *you*,” said Tackleton. “ As I can't; thank'ee. Between ourselves (as I told you before, eh ?) I don't much think I shall have the less joy in my married life, because May hasn't been too officious about me, and too demonstrative. Good-by. Take care of yourself.”

The Carrier stood looking after him until he was smaller in the distance than his horse's flowers and favors near at hand; and then, with a deep sigh, went strolling like a restless,

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broken man, among some neighboring elms; unwilling to return until the clock was on the eve of striking.

His little wife, being left alone, sobbed pitiously; but often dried her eyes and checked herself, to say how good he was, how excellent he was ! and once or twice she laughed; so heartily, triumphantly, and incoherently (still crying all the time), that Tilly was quite horrified.

“Ow if you please don’t ! ” said Tilly “ It’s enough to dead and bury the Baby, so it is if you please.”

“ Will you bring him sometimes, to see his father, Tilly,” inquired her mistress, drying her eyes; “ when I can’t live here, and have gone to my old home ? ”

“ Ow if you please don’t ! ” cried Tilly, throwing back her head, and bursting out into a howl — she looked at the moment uncommonly like Boxer; “ Ow if you please don’t ! Ow, what has everybody gone and been and done with everybody, making everybody else so wretched ! Ow-w-w-w ! ”

The soft-hearted Slowboy trailed off at this juncture, into such a deplorable howl, the more tremendous from its long suppression, that

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she must infallibly have awakened the Baby, and frightened him into something serious (probably convulsions), if her eyes had not encountered Caleb Plummer, leading in his daughter. This spectacle restoring her to a sense of the proprieties, she stood for some few moments silent, with her mouth wide open; and then, posting off to the bed on which the Baby lay asleep, danced in a weird, Saint Vitus manner on the floor, and at the same time rummaged with her face and head among the bedclothes, apparently deriving much relief from those extraordinary operations.

“Mary!” said Bertha. “Not at the marriage!”

“I told her you would not be there, mum,” whispered Caleb. “I heard as much last night. But bless you,” said the little man, taking her tenderly by both hands, “*I* don’t care for what they say. *I* don’t believe them. There an’t much of me, but that little should be torn to pieces sooner than I’d trust a word against you.”

He put his arms about her and hugged her, as a child might have hugged one of his own dolls.

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“Bertha couldn’t stay at home this morning,” said Caleb. “She was afraid, I know, to hear the bells ring, and couldn’t trust herself to be so near them on their wedding-day. So we started in good time and came here. I have been thinking of what I have done,” said Caleb, after a moment’s pause; “I have been blaming myself till I hardly knew what to do or where to turn, for the distress of mind I have caused her; and I’ve come to the conclusion that I’d better, if you’ll stay with me, mum, the while, tell her the truth. You’ll stay with me the while?” he inquired, trembling from head to foot. “I don’t know what effect it may have upon her; I don’t know what she’ll think of me; I don’t know that she’ll ever care for her poor father afterwards. But it’s best for her that she should be undeceived, and I must bear the consequences as I deserve!”

“Mary,” said Bertha, “where is your hand! Ah! Here it is: here it is!” pressing it to her lips, with a smile, and drawing it through her arm. “I heard them speaking softly among themselves, last night, of some blame against you. They were wrong.” The Carrier’s Wife was silent. Caleb answered for her.

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“They were wrong,” he said.

“I knew it!” cried Bertha proudly. “I told them so. I scorned to hear a word! Blame *her* with justice!” she pressed her hand between her own, and the soft cheek against her face. “No! I am not so blind as that.”

Her father went on one side of her, while Dot remained upon the other: holding her hand.

“I know you all,” said Bertha, “better than you think. But none so well as her. Not even you, father. There is nothing half so real and so true about me, as she is. If I could be restored to sight this instant, and not a word were spoken, I could choose her from a crowd! My sister!”

“Bertha, my dear,” said Caleb, “I have something on my mind I want to tell you, while we three are alone. Hear me kindly! I have a confession to make to you, my darling.”

“A confession, father?”

“I have wandered from the truth and lost myself, my child,” said Caleb, with a pitiable expression in his bewildered face. “I have wandered from the truth, intending to be kind to you; and have been cruel.”

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She turned her wonder-stricken face towards him, and repeated "Cruel!"

"He accuses himself too strongly, Bertha," said Dot. "You'll say so, presently. You'll be the first to tell him so."

"He cruel to me!" cried Bertha, with a smile of incredulity.

"Not meaning it, my child," said Caleb. "But I have been; though I never suspected it, till yesterday. My dear blind daughter, hear me and forgive me! The world you live in, heart of mine, doesn't exist as I have represented it. The eyes you have trusted in, have been false to you." She turned her wonder-stricken face towards him still; but drew back, and clung closer to her friend.

"Your road in life was rough, my poor one," said Caleb, "and I meant to smooth it for you. I have altered objects, changed the characters of people, invented many things that never have been, to make you happier. I have had concealments from you, put deceptions on you, God forgive me! and surrounded you with fancies."

"But living people are not fancies!" she said hurriedly, and turning very pale, and still retiring from him. "You can't change them."

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“I have done so, Bertha,” pleaded Caleb. “There is one person that you know, my dove — ”

“Oh, father! why do you say I know!” she answered, in a tone of keen reproach. “What and whom do *I* know! I, who have no leader! I, so miserably blind!”

In the anguish of her heart, she stretched out her hands, as if she were groping her way; then spread them, in a manner most forlorn and sad, upon her face.

“The marriage that takes place to-day,” said Caleb, “is with a stern, sordid, grinding man. A hard master to you and me, my dear, for many years. Ugly in his looks, and in his nature. Cold and callous always. Unlike what I have painted him to you in everything, my child. In everything.”

“Oh, why,” cried the Blind Girl, tortured, as it seemed, almost beyond endurance, “why did you ever do this! Why did you ever fill my heart so full, and then come in like Death, and tear away the objects of my love! O Heaven, how blind I am! How helpless and alone!”

Her afflicted father hung his head, and offered no reply but in his penitence and sorrow.

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She had been but a short time in this passion of regret, when the Cricket on the Hearth, unheard by all but her, began to chirp. Not merrily, but in a low, faint sorrowing way. It was so mournful that her tears began to flow; and when the Presence which had been beside the Carrier all night, appeared behind her, pointing to her father, they fell down like rain.

She heard the Cricket-voice more plainly soon, and was conscious, through her blindness, of the Presence hovering about her father.

“Mary,” said the Blind Girl, “tell me what my home is. What it truly is.”

“It is a poor place, Bertha; very poor and bare indeed. The house will scarcely keep out wind and rain another winter. It is as roughly shielded from the weather, Bertha,” Dot continued in a low, clear voice, “as your poor father in his sack-cloth coat.”

The Blind Girl, greatly agitated, rose, and led the Carrier’s little wife aside.

“Those presents that I took such care of; that came almost at my wish, and were so dearly welcome to me,” she said, trembling; “where did they come from? Did you send them?”

The Cricket on the Hearth

“No.”

“Who then?”

Dot saw she knew, already, and was silent. The Blind Girl spread her hands before her face again. But in quite another manner now.

“Dear Mary, a moment. One moment! More this way. Speak softly to me. You are true, I know. You’d not deceive me now; would you?”

“No, Bertha, indeed!”

“No, I am sure you would not. You have too much pity for me. Mary, look across the room to where we were just now — to where my father is — my father, so compassionate and loving to me — and tell me what you see.”

“I see,” said Dot, who understood her well, “an old man sitting in a chair, and leaning sorrowfully on the back, with his face resting on his hand. As if his child should comfort him, Bertha.”

“Yes, yes. She will. Go on.”

“He is an old man worn with care and work. He is a spare, dejected, thoughtful, gray-haired man. I see him now, despondent and bowed down, and striving against nothing. But, Bertha, I have seen him many times

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before, and striving hard in many ways for one great sacred object. And I honor his gray head, and bless him ! ”

The Blind Girl broke away from her; and throwing herself upon her knees before him, took the gray head to her breast.

“ It is my sight restored. It is my sight ! ” she cried. “ I have been blind, and now my eyes are open. I never knew him ! To think I might have died, and never truly seen the father who has been so loving to me ! ”

There were no words for Caleb’s emotion.

“ There is not a gallant figure on this earth,” exclaimed the Blind Girl, holding him in her embrace, “ that I would love so dearly, and would cherish so devotedly, as this ! The grayer, and more worn, the dearer, father ! Never let them say I am blind again. There’s not a furrow in his face, there’s not a hair upon his head, that shall be forgotten in my prayers and thanks to Heaven ! ”

Caleb managed to articulate “ My Bertha ! ”

“ And in my blindness, I believed him,” said the girl caressing him with tears of exquisite affection, “ to be so different ! And having him beside me, day by day, so mindful of me always, never dreamed of this ! ”

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“The fresh, smart father in the blue coat, Bertha,” said poor Caleb. “He’s gone!”

“Nothing is gone,” she answered. “Dearest father, no! Everything is here—in you. The father that I loved so well; the father that I never loved enough, and never knew; the benefactor whom I first began to reverence and love, because he had such sympathy for me; all are here in you. Nothing is dead to me. The soul of all that was most dear to me is here—here, with the worn face, and the gray head. And I am NOT blind, father, any longer!”

Dot’s whole attention had been concentrated, during this discourse, upon the father and daughter; but looking, now, towards the little Haymaker in the Moorish meadow, she saw the clock was within a few minutes of striking, and fell immediately, into a nervous and excited state.

“Father,” said Bertha, hesitating, “Mary.”

“Yes my dear,” returned Caleb. “Here she is.”

“There is no change in *her*. You never told me anything of *her* that was not true?”

“I should have done it my dear, I am

The Cricket on the Hearth

afraid," returned Caleb, "if I could have made her better than she was. But I must have changed her for the worse, if I had changed her at all. Nothing could improve her, Bertha."

Confident as the Blind Girl had been when she asked the question, her delight and pride in the reply and her renewed embrace of Dot, were charming to behold.

"More changes than you think for, may happen though, my dear," said Dot. "Changes for the better, I mean; changes for great joy to some of us. You mustn't let them startle you too much, if any such should ever happen, and affect you? Are those wheels upon the road? You've a quick ear, Bertha. Are they wheels?"

"Yes. Coming very fast."

"I—I—I know you have a quick ear," said Dot, placing her hand upon her heart, and evidently talking on, as fast as she could, to hide its palpitating state, "because I have noticed it often, and because you were so quick to find out that strange step last night. Though why you should have said, as I very well recollect you did say, Bertha, 'Whose step is that!' and why you should

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have taken any greater observation of it than of any other step, I don't know. Though as I said just now, there are great changes in the world: great changes: and we can't do better than prepare ourselves to be surprised at hardly anything."

Caleb wondered what this meant; perceiving that, she spoke to him no less than to his daughter. He saw her, with astonishment, so fluttered and distressed that she could scarcely breathe; and holding to a chair, to save herself from falling.

"They are wheels indeed!" she panted. "Coming nearer! Nearer! Very close! And now you hear them stopping at the garden-gate! And now you hear a step outside the door—the same step, Bertha, is it not!—and now!"—

She uttered a wild cry of uncontrollable delight; and running up to Caleb put her hands upon his eyes, as a young man rushed into the room, and flinging away his hat in the air, came sweeping down upon them.

"Is it over?" cried Dot.

"Yes."

"Happily over?"

"Yes!"

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“Do you recollect the voice, dear Caleb? Did you ever hear the like of it before?” cried Dot.

“If my boy in the Golden South Americas was alive”—said Caleb, trembling.

“He is alive!” shrieked Dot, removing her hands from his eyes, and clapping them in ecstasy; “look at him! See where he stands before you, healthy and strong! Your own dear son! Your own dear living, loving brother, Bertha!”

All honor to the little creature for her transports! All honor to her tears and laughter, when the three were locked in one another’s arms! All honor to the heartiness with which she met the sunburnt sailor-fellow, with his dark streaming hair, half way, and never turned her rosy little mouth aside, but suffered him to kiss it, freely, and to press her to his bounding heart!

And honor to the Cuckoo too—why not!—for bursting out of the trap-door in the Moorish Palace like a housebreaker, and hiccoughing twelve times on the assembled company, as if he had got drunk for joy! The Carrier, entering, started back. And well he might, to find himself in such good company.

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“Look, John!” said Caleb, exultingly, “look here! My own boy from the Golden South Americas! My own son! Him that you fitted out, and sent away yourself! Him that you were always such a friend to!”

The Carrier advanced to seize him by the hand; but, recoiling, as some feature in his face awakened a remembrance of the Deaf Man in the Cart, said:

“Edward! Was it you?”

“Now tell him all!” cried Dot. “Tell him all, Edward; and don’t spare me, for nothing shall make me spare myself in his eyes, ever again.”

“I was the man,” said Edward.

“And could you steal, disguised, into the house of your old friend?” rejoined the Carrier. “There was a frank boy once—how many years is it, Caleb, since we heard that he was dead, and had it proved, we thought?—who never would have done that.”

“There was a generous friend of mine, once; more a father to me than a friend;” said Edward, “who never would have judged me, or any other man, unheard. You were he. So I am certain you will hear me now.”

The Carrier, with a troubled glance at Dot,

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who still kept far away from him, replied, "Well! that's but fair. I will."

"You must know that when I left here, a boy," said Edward, "I was in love, and my love was returned. She was a very young girl, who perhaps (you may tell me) didn't know her own mind. But I knew mine, and I had a passion for her."

"You had!" exclaimed the Carrier. "You!"

"Indeed I had," returned the other. "And she returned it. I have ever since believed she did, and I am sure she did."

"Heaven help me!" said the Carrier. "This is worse than all."

"Constant to her," said Edward, "and returning, full of hope, after many hardships and perils, to redeem my part of our old contract, I heard, twenty miles away, that she was false to me; that she had forgotten me; and had bestowed herself upon another and a richer man. I had no mind to reproach her; but I wished to see her, and to prove beyond dispute that this was true. I hoped she might have been forced into it, against her own desire and recollection. It would be small comfort, but it would be some, I thought, and on I came. That I might have the truth, the real

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truth; observing freely for myself, and judging for myself, without obstruction on the one hand, or presenting my own influence (if I had any) before her, on the other; I dressed myself—unlike myself—you know how; and waited on the road—you know where. You had no suspicion of me; neither had—had she,” pointing to Dot, “until I whispered in her ear at that fireside, and she so nearly betrayed me.”

“But when she knew that Edward was alive, and had come back,” sobbed Dot, now speaking for herself, as she had burned to do all through this narrative: “and when she knew his purpose, she advised him by all means to keep his secret close; for his old friend John Peerybingle was much too open in his nature, and too clumsy in all artifice—being a clumsy man in general,” said Dot, half laughing and half crying—“to keep it for him. And when she—that’s me, John,” sobbed the little woman—“told him all, and how his sweetheart had believed him to be dead; and how she had at last been over-persuaded by her mother into a marriage which the silly, dear old thing called advantageous; and when she—that’s me again, John—told him they were not

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yet married (though close upon it), and that it would be nothing but a sacrifice if it went on, for there was no love on her side; and when he went nearly mad with joy to hear it; then she — that's me again — said she would go between them, as she had often done before in old times, John, and would sound his sweetheart and be sure that what she — me again, John — said and thought was right. And it was right, John! And they were brought together, John! And they were married, John, an hour ago! And here's the Bride! And Gruff and Tackleton may die a bachelor! And I'm a happy little woman. May, God bless you!"

She was an irresistible little woman, if that be anything to the purpose; and never so completely irresistible as in her present transports. There never were congratulations so endearing and delicious, as those she lavished on herself and on the Bride.

Amid the tumult of emotions in his breast, the honest Carrier had stood, confounded. Flying, now, towards her, Dot stretched out her hand to stop him, and retreated as before.

"No, John, no! Hear all! Don't love me any more, John, till you've heard every

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word I have to say. It was wrong to have a secret from you, John. I'm very sorry. I didn't think it any harm, till I came and sat down by you on the little stool last night. But when I knew by what was written in your face, that you had seen me walking in the gallery with Edward, and when I knew what you thought, I felt how giddy and how wrong it was. But oh, dear John, how could you, could you, think so!"

Little woman, how she sobbed again! John Peerybingle would have caught her in his arms. But no; she wouldn't let him.

"Don't you love me yet, please John! Not for a long time yet! When I was sad about this intended marriage, dear, it was because I remembered May and Edward such young lovers; and knew that her heart was far away from Tackleton. You believe that, now. Don't you John?"

John was going to make another rush at this appeal; but she stopped him again.

"No; keep there, please John! When I laugh at you, as I sometimes do, John, and call you clumsy and a dear old goose, and names of that sort, it's because I love you John, so well, and take such pleasure in your

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ways, and wouldn't see you altered in the least respect to have you made a King to-morrow."

"Hooroar!" said Caleb, with unusual vigor. "My opinion!"

"And when I speak of people being middle-aged, and steady, John, and pretend that we are a humdrum couple, going on in a jog-trot sort of a way, it's only because I'm such a silly little thing, John, that I like, sometimes, to act a kind of Play with Baby, and all that: and make believe."

She saw that he was coming; and stopped him again. But she was very nearly too late.

"No, don't love me for another minute or two, if you please John! What I want most to tell you, I have kept to the last. My dear, good, generous John, when we were talking the other night about the Cricket, I had it on my lips to say, that at first I did not love you quite so dearly as I do now; that when I first came home here, I was half afraid I mightn't learn to love you every bit as well as I hoped and prayed I might—being so very young, John! But, dear John, every day and hour I loved you more and more. And if I could have loved you better than I do, the noble

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words I heard you say this morning would have made me. But I can't. All the affection that I had (it was a great deal John) I gave you, as you well deserve, long, long ago and I have no more left to give. Now, my dear husband, take me to your heart again! That's my home, John; and never, never think of sending me to any other!"

You never will derive so much delight from seeing a glorious little woman in the arms of a third party, as you would have felt if you had seen Dot run into the Carrier's embrace. It was the most complete, unmitigated, soul-fraught little piece of earnestness that ever you beheld in all your days.

You may be sure the Carrier was in a state of perfect rapture; and you may be sure Dot was likewise; and you may be sure they all were, inclusive of Miss Slowboy, who wept copiously for joy, and wishing to include her young charge in the general interchange of congratulations, handed round the Baby to everybody in succession, as if it were something to drink.

But, now, the sound of wheels was heard again outside the door; and somebody exclaimed that Gruff and Tackleton was coming

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back. Speedily that worthy gentleman appeared, looking warm and flustered.

“Why, what the Devil’s this, John Peerybingle!” said Tackleton. “There’s some mistake, I appointed Mrs. Tackleton to meet me at the church, and I’ll swear I passed her on the road, on her way here. Oh! here she is! I beg your pardon, sir; I haven’t the pleasure of knowing you; but if you can do me the favor to spare this young lady, she has rather a particular engagement this morning.”

“But I can’t spare her,” returned Edward. “I couldn’t think of it.”

“What do you mean, you vagabond?” said Tackleton.

“I mean, that as I can make allowance for your being vexed,” returned the other with a smile, “I am as deaf to harsh discourse this morning, as I was to all discourse last night.”

The look that Tackleton bestowed upon him, and the start he gave!

“I am sorry, sir,” said Edward, holding out May’s left hand and especially the third finger; “that the young lady can’t accompany you to church; but as she has been there once, this morning, perhaps you’ll excuse her.”

Tackleton looked hard at the third finger,

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and took a little piece of silver paper, apparently containing a ring, from his waistcoat-pocket.

“Miss Slowboy,” said Tackleton, “will you have the kindness to throw that in the fire? Thank’ee.”

“It was a previous engagement, quite an old engagement, that prevented my wife from keeping her appointment with you, I assure you,” said Edward.

“Mr. Tackleton will do me the justice to acknowledge that I revealed it to him faithfully, and that I told him, many times, I never could forget it,” said May, blushing.

“Oh certainly!” said Tackleton. “Oh to be sure. Oh it’s all right. It’s quite correct. Mrs. Edward Plummer, I infer?”

“That’s the name,” returned the bridegroom.

“Ah, I shouldn’t have known you sir,” said Tackleton, scrutinizing his face narrowly, and making a low bow. “I give you joy sir!”

“Thank’ee.”

“Mrs. Peerybingle,” said Tackleton, turning suddenly to where she stood with her husband; “I am sorry. You haven’t done me a very

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great kindness, but upon my life I am sorry. You are better than I thought you. John Peerybingle, I am sorry. You understand me; that's enough. It's quite correct, ladies and gentlemen all, and perfectly satisfactory. Good-morning ! ”

With these words he carried it off, and carried himself off too: merely stopping at the door, to take the flowers and favors from his horse's head, and to kick that animal once, in the ribs, as a means of informing him that there was a screw loose in his arrangements.

Of course it became a serious duty now, to make such a day of it, as should mark these events for a high Feast and Festival in the Peerybingle Calendar for evermore. Accordingly, Dot went to work to produce such an entertainment, as should reflect undying honor on the house and on every one concerned; and in a very short space of time, she was up to her dimpled elbows in flour, and whitening the Carrier's coat, every time he came near her, by stopping him to give him a kiss. That good fellow washed the greens, and peeled the turnips, and broke the plates, and upset iron pots full of cold water on the fire, and made himself useful in all sorts of ways: while

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a couple of professional assistants, hastily called in from somewhere in the neighborhood, as on a point of life or death, ran against each other in all the doorways and round all the corners, and everybody tumbled over Tilly Slowboy and the Baby, everywhere. Tilly never came out in such force before. Her ubiquity was the theme of general admiration. She was a stumbling-block in the passage at five-and-twenty minutes past two; a man-trap in the kitchen at half-past two precisely; and a pitfall in the garret at five-and-twenty minutes to three. The Baby's head was, as it were, a test and touchstone for every description of matter, — animal, vegetable, and mineral. Nothing was in use that day that didn't come, at some time or other, into close acquaintance with it.

Then there was a great Expedition set on foot to go and find out Mrs. Fielding; and to be dismally penitent to that excellent gentlewoman; and to bring her back, by force, if needful, to be happy and forgiving. And when the Expedition first discovered her, she would listen to no terms at all, but said, an unspeakable number of times, that ever she should have lived to see the day ! and couldn't

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he got to say anything else, except, "Now carry me to the grave:" which seemed absurd, on account of her not being dead, or anything at all like it. After a time, she lapsed into a state of dreadful calmness, and observed, that when that unfortunate train of circumstances had occurred in the Indigo Trade, she had foreseen that she would be exposed, during her whole life, to every species of insult and contumely; and that she was glad to find it was the case; and begged they wouldn't trouble themselves about her, — for what was she? oh, dear! a nobody! — but would forget that such a being lived, and would take their course in life without her. From this bitterly sarcastic mood, she passed into an angry one, in which she gave vent to the remarkable expression that the worm would turn if trodden on; and, after that, she yielded to a soft regret, and said, if they had only given her their confidence, what might she not have had it in her power to suggest! Taking advantage of this crisis in her feelings, the Expedition embraced her; and she very soon had her gloves on, and was on her way to John Peerybingle's in a state of unimpeachable gentility; with a paper parcel at her side containing a cap of

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state, almost as tall, and quite as stiff, as a mitre.

Then, there were Dot's father and mother to come, in another little chaise; and they were behind their time; and fears were entertained; and there was much looking out for them down the road; and Mrs. Fielding always would look in the wrong and morally impossible directions; and being apprised thereof, hoped she might take the liberty of looking where she pleased. At last they came : a chubby little couple jogging along in a snug and comfortable little way that quite belonged to the Dot family; and Dot and her mother, side by side, were wonderful to see. They were so like each other.

Then, Dot's mother had to renew her acquaintance with May's mother; and May's mother always stood on her gentility; and Dot's mother never stood on anything but her active little feet. And old Dot—so to call Dot's father, I forgot it wasn't his right name, but never mind—took liberties and shook hands at first sight, and seemed to think a cap but so much starch and muslin, and didn't defer himself at all to the Indigo Trade, but said there was no help for it now; and, in

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Mrs. Fielding's summing up, was a good-natured kind of man—but coarse, my dear.

I wouldn't have missed Dot, doing the honors in her wedding-gown, my benison on her bright face! for any money. No! nor the good Carrier, so jovial and so ruddy, at the bottom of the table. Nor the brown, fresh sailor-fellow, and his handsome wife. Nor any one among them. To have missed the dinner would have been to miss as jolly and as stout a meal as man need eat; and to have missed the overflowing cups in which they drank The Wedding-Day, would have been the greatest miss of all.

After dinner, Caleb sang the song about the Sparkling Bowl. As I'm a living man, hoping to keep so, for a year or two, he sang it through.

And, by the by, a most unlooked-for incident occurred, just as he finished the last verse.

There was a tap at the door; and a man came staggering in, without saying with your leave, or by your leave, with something heavy on his head. Setting this down in the middle of the table, symmetrically in the centre of the nuts and apples, he said:

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“Mr. Tackleton’s compliments, and as he hasn’t got no use for the cake himself, p’raps you’ll eat it.”

And with those words, he walked off.

There was some surprise among the company, as you may imagine. Mrs. Fielding, being a lady of infinite discernment, suggested that the cake was poisoned, and related a narrative of a cake, which, within her knowledge, had turned a seminary for young ladies, blue. But she was overruled by acclamation; and the cake was cut by May, with much ceremony and rejoicing.

I don’t think any one had tasted it, when there came another tap at the door, and the same man appeared again, having under his arm a vast brown paper parcel.

“Mr. Tackleton’s compliments, and he’d sent a few toys for the Babby. They an’t ugly.”

After the delivery of which expressions, he retired again.

The whole company would have experienced great difficulty in finding words for their astonishment, even if they had had ample time to seek them. But, they had none at all; for, the messenger had scarcely shut the door

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behind him, when there came another tap, and Tackleton himself walked in.

“Mrs. Peerybingle!” said the Toy-merchant, hat in hand. “I’m sorry. I’m more sorry than I was this morning. I have had time to think of it. John Peerybingle! I’m sour by disposition; but I can’t help being sweetened, more or less, by coming face to face with such a man as you. Caleb! This unconscious little nurse gave me a broken hint last night, of which I have found the thread. I blush to think how easily I might have bound you and your daughter to me, and what a miserable idiot I was, when I took her for one! Friends, one and all, my house is very lonely to-night. I have not so much as a Cricket on my Hearth. I have scared them all away. Be gracious to me; let me join this happy party!”

He was at home in five minutes. You never saw such a fellow. What *had* he been doing with himself all his life, never to have known, before, his great capacity of being jovial! Or what had the Fairies been doing with him, to have effected such a change!

“John! you won’t send me home this evening; will you?” whispered Dot.

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He had been very near it though !

There wanted but one living creature to make the party complete; and, in the twinkling of an eye, there he was, very thirsty with hard running, and engaged in hopeless endeavors to squeeze his head into a narrow pitcher. He had gone with the cart to its journey's end, very much disgusted with the absence of his master, and stupendously rebellious to the Deputy. After lingering about the stable for some little time, vainly attempting to incite the old horse to the mutinous act of returning on his own account, he had walked into the taproom and laid himself down before the fire. But suddenly yielding to the conviction that the Deputy was a humbug, and must be abandoned, he had got up again, turned tail, and come home.

There was a dance in the evening. With which general mention of that recreation, I should have left it alone, if I had not some reason to suppose that it was quite an original dance, and one of a most uncommon figure. It was formed in an odd way; in this way.

Edward, that sailor-fellow — a good, free, dashing sort of a fellow he was — had been telling them various marvels concerning par-

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rots, and mines, and Mexicans, and gold dust, when all at once he took it in his head to jump up from his seat and propose a dance; for Bertha's harp was there, and she had such a hand upon it as you seldom hear. Dot (sly little piece of affectation when she chose) said her dancing days were over; I think because the Carrier was smoking his pipe, and she liked sitting by him, best. Mrs. Fielding had no choice, of course, but to say *her* dancing days were over, after that; and everybody said the same, except May; May was ready.

So, May and Edward get up, amid great applause, to dance alone; and Bertha plays her liveliest tune.

Well! if you'll believe me, they have not been dancing five minutes, when suddenly the Carrier flings his pipe away, takes Dot round the waist, dashes out into the room, and starts off with her, toe and heel, quite wonderfully. Tackleton no sooner sees this, than he skims across to Mrs. Fielding, takes her round the waist, and follows suit. Old Dot no sooner sees this, than up he is, all alive, whisks off Mrs. Dot in the middle of the dance, and is the foremost there. Caleb no sooner sees this, than he clutches Tilly Slowboy by both

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hands and goes off at score; Miss Slowboy, firm in the belief that diving hotly in among the other couples, and effecting any number of concussions with them, is your only principle of footing it.

Hark ! how the Cricket joins the music with its Chirp, Chirp, Chirp; and how the Kettle hums !

.

But what is this ! Even as I listen to them, blithely, and turn towards Dot, for one last glimpse of a little figure very pleasant to me, she and the rest have vanished into air, and I am left alone. A Cricket sings upon the Hearth; a broken child's-toy lies upon the ground; and nothing else remains.

Descriptive Power

Descriptive Power

The power to make a reader see before him the pictured images in an author's mind is not possessed equally by all writers. It is a power so dependent upon certain intellectual qualities that when those qualities are lacking or feebly developed the writing will lack vividness and pictorial effect. If a person lacks close and accurate observation, his power of description cannot be great, for having never seen things accurately he has not the material with which to construct his pictures. A vivid imagination will not avail unless it has in control a host of little things observed and ready for new arrangement and combination. In *The Cricket on the Hearth* there is this paragraph descriptive of Boxer's hilarity:

“Then, Boxer gave occasion to more good natured recognition of, and by, the Carrier, than half a dozen Christians could have done ! Everybody knew him, all along the road, especially the fowls and pigs, who when they saw him approaching, with his body all on one side, and his ears pricked up inquisitively, and that knob of a tail making the most of itself in the air, immediately withdrew into remote back settlements, without waiting for the honor of a nearer acquaintance. He had business everywhere ; going down all the

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turnings, looking into all the wells, bolting in and out of the cottages, dashing into the midst of all the Dame-Schools, fluttering all the pigeons, magnifying the tails of all the cats, and trotting into the public houses like a regular customer. Wherever he went, somebody or other might have been heard to cry, 'Halloa! Here's Boxer!' and out came that somebody forthwith, accompanied by at least two or three other somebodies, to give John Peerybingle and his pretty wife, Good Day."

Notice some of the points of particular and unusually close observation: "With his body all on one side and his ears pricked up inquisitively, and that knob of a tail making the most of itself in the air"; "He had business everywhere"; "Magnifying the tails of the cats." These and other minor phrases show that Dickens had critically observed the movement of some joyful, racing dog, and the consternation he created in the world of lesser animals.

But not only had he the power of seeing accurately, he was able to seize upon the salient features of each thing and act. It was the fluttering of the pigeons, the magnified tail of the cat, the hasty retreat of the fowls and pigs and other startling things that he used to make up the picture of the excited Boxer.

He must have been able to see clearly, and to grasp salient points readily, but he must have had also a retentive memory to have held these im-

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pressions and a marked ability to recall these facts of the mind at will. Something like this then is the psychological history of the paragraph : Dickens had seen racing dogs ; his attention was attracted by them ; he noted striking facts of the race. He retained these facts in his mind till he had need of a rampant Boxer and then recalled and clothed them in his own inimitable phraseology.

Find the description of the ride through the fog and see if you detect evidence of the same process. What phrases show keen observation ? What were the Fairy Rings ? Did you ever see them ? Would they be conspicuous through a fog ? Would the trees *start* out of the mist abruptly ? If so, why should they *glide* away ? Is fire *white* in the day-time ? Is it the fog that makes *here and there a dash of red in it* ? Do you think he has selected conspicuous things in the fog scenery ? Is the picture as clear as the one of Boxer ? Have you seen a hilarious dog on such a rampage ? Did you ever ride through a fog ? Would your own experience have anything to do with the clearness of your picture ? Find in this story and elsewhere in this course a number of descriptive passages and search for evidences of minute and unusual powers of observation. Does this power seem to vary in different authors ?

In the second stanza of *The Cotter's Saturday Night* the close of a winter day is described by the

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enumeration of a few particulars which suggest to us a vivid picture. We hear the angry moan of a chill wind blowing at the close of a short northern day. We see the oxen covered with mud from their weary round at the plow, slowly going from their toil, the crows flying in flocks to their nightly roost, and the weary cottager, his exhausting labor over, collecting his tools that he may spend the Sabbath at ease and at rest. The poet has really said little but he has gathered those noteworthy facts that appeal to our imagination. Every line suggests darkness closing over a wearisome day, and exhausting toil relieved only by the thought of a night of slumber and a day of rest. It is a different picture from that which Gray calls up in his elegy when "all the air a solemn stillness holds" and "drowsy tinklings lull the distant folds." The two poets each intent upon his own imaginings have given to their descriptions an emotional tone as distinct and as different as though there were no possible likeness in the materials they use. In poetry, more frequently than in prose, the author rouses by suggestive words a train of emotions that make the detailed realistic descriptions pale in comparison with the brilliant pictures we create for ourselves. No study of the descriptive power would be complete without a full recognition of this emotional phase. We can paint with the coloring of our own imagination more brilliant and lasting pictures than the most intel-

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lectual writer can depict for us be he ever so minute and accurate.

When Burns says :

“Th’ expectant wee-things, toddlin’, stacher thro’
To meet their dad, wi’ flichterin’ noise and
glee,”

we need no more details. He has caught our sympathy and we people that simple fireside with little children as real and as lifelike as those who have at some time brightened our own homes.

“The mother wi’ her needle an’ her shears,
Gars auld claes look amaist as weel’s the new.”

What is there in those two lines to give us such a charming picture of devoted and industrious motherhood? It is the surpassing genius of the poet, whose own feelings are as delicately attuned as those of his most sensitive hearers. Just why it is so or how it is done we cannot tell.

“The youngster’s artless heart o’erflows wi’ joy,
But blate and laithfu’, scarce can weel behave.”

Burns has observed such a strapping youth, so honest and so embarrassed, and, his own heart keenly sympathetic, makes us at once the considerate friends of the bashful youth. Through the whole poem he makes us feel his earnestness and sincerity and leaves us finally the warm admirers of this simple peasant family. What he says we take seriously and wherever he sketches an outline for us we fill it in with the royal colors of truth.

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But does not Dickens reach the same end? Do you not as distinctly see the little hearth about which John and Mary Peerybingle sat with the Baby? And do you not feel as keenly the startling integrity of John, the absolute devotion of Caleb to his blind daughter? And yet in how different a manner is the result brought about! Dickens sees everything with his fun-loving eyes and when he tells anything it is usually with a fillip of humor that piques our curiosity, entertains us with its playful turns, but leaves us finally with a serious thought somewhere. Even in that awful night vigil when John sat by the fire, the gun upon the wall and the helpless stranger in the adjacent room, even then, with the Cricket struggling to chirp away the murderous thoughts that fought for mastery in the Carrier's breast, Dickens could not wholly restrain his whimsical ideas but must picture Dot "nodding to her would-be partners, one by one, as they passed, but with a comical indifference, enough to make them go drown themselves immediately if they were her admirers — and they must have been so more or less; they couldn't help it." But when the whole idea is a happy and cheerful one his radiant spirit fairly overflows:

"She was, out and out, the very best filler of a pipe, I should say, in the four quarters of the globe. To see her put that chubby little finger in the bowl and then blow down the pipe to clear the tube, and, when she had done so, affect to think

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that there was really something in the tube, and blow a dozen times, and hold it to her eye like a telescope with a most provoking little twist in her capital little face, as she looked down it, was quite a brilliant thing. As to the tobacco, she was perfect mistress of the subject; and her lighting of the pipe, with a wisp of paper, when the Carrier had it in his mouth — going so very near his nose, and yet not scorching it — was Art, high Art.”

As one becomes better acquainted with literature, he sees through what different media its makers have looked. Shelley’s melancholy forebodings, Burns’s faith in the brotherhood of man, Dickens’s gayety, Wordsworth’s simplicity of spirit and Pope’s respect for exactness and propriety, color the descriptions of each and tinge their work with characteristics easily recognized by the student.

Gather numerous bits of description and compare them, noting as far as possible their peculiarities and the sources of their power. Are they plain, matter of fact, and filled with minutiae acquired only by the closest observation or do they fix your imagination by their suggestiveness?

Do you find some poems containing little or no description? Could you classify the poems you have read as those intended to make pictures of things and acts and those intended to be philosophic or emotional? Are there poems that stand between the two classes, in some of which the emotions are called upon to aid the mind in

Descriptive Power

picturing, while in others the pictures stir our emotions to activity ?

This description by Browning of the face of a beautiful young girl is remarkable for its skillful and delicate word painting:

If one could have that little head of hers
Painted upon a background of pale gold,
Such as the Tuscan's early art prefers !
No shade encroaching on the matchless mould
Of those two lips, which should be opening soft
In the pure profile ; not as when she laughs,
For that spoils all: but rather as if aloft
Yon hyacinth, she loves so, leaned its staff's
Burthen of honey-colored buds, to kiss
And capture 'twixt the lips apart for this.
Then her lithe neck, three fingers might surround,
How it should waver, on the pale gold ground,
Up to the fruit-shaped, perfect chin it lifts !
I know, Correggio loves to mass, in rifts
Of heaven, his angel faces, orb on orb
Breaking its outline, burning shades absorb :
But these are only massed there, I should think,
Waiting to see some wonder momentarily
Grow out, stand full, fade slow against the sky
(That's the pale ground you'd see this sweet face
by),
All heaven, meanwhile condensed into one eye
Which fears to lose the wonder, should it wink.

The Cotter's Saturday Night

ROBERT BURNS

The Cotter's Saturday Night

INSCRIBED TO R. AIKIN, ESQ.¹

Let not ambition mock their useful toil,
Their homely joys, and destiny obscure;
Nor grandeur hear, with a disdainful smile,
The short and simple annals of the poor.

GRAY.

My lov'd, my honour'd, much respected friend !
No mercenary bard his homage pays :
With honest pride I scorn each selfish end ;
My dearest meed, a friend's esteem and
praise :
To you I sing, in simple Scottish lays,
The lowly train in life's sequester'd scene ;
The native feelings strong, the guileless ways ;
What Aikin in a cottage would have been :
Ah ! tho' his worth unknown, far happier
there, I ween.

I.

November chill blows loud wi' angry sugh :²
The short'ning winter day is near a close ;
The miry beasts retreating frae³ the pleugh ;⁴

1. A solicitor friend residing at Ayr.

2. Sough.

3. From.

4. Plow.

The Cotter's Saturday Night

The black'ning trains o' craws to their repose :

The toil-worn cotter frae his labour goes,

This night his weekly moil⁵ is at an end,
Collects his spades, his mattocks, and his hoes,

Hoping the morn in ease and rest to spend,
And weary, o'er the moor, his course does hameward bend.

II.

At length his lonely cot appears in view,

Beneath the shelter of an aged tree :

Th' expectant wee-things, toddlin', stacher⁶
thro'

To meet their dad, wi' flichterin' noise an' glee.

His wee bit ingle, blinkin' bonnily,

His clean hearth-stane, his thriftie wifie's smile,

The lispin' infant prattling on his knee,

Does a' his weary, carking⁷ cares beguile,
An' makes him quite forget his labour and his toil.

III.

Belyve,⁸ the elder bairns come drappin' in,

At service out, amang the farmers roun':

5. Drudgery.

6. Stagger.

7. Trying.

8. Soon.

The Cotter's Saturday Night

Some ca' ⁹ the pleugh, some herd, some
tentie ¹⁰ rin

A cannie ¹¹ errand to a neebor town :
Their eldest hope, their Jenny, woman grown,
In youthfu' bloom, love sparklin' in her
e'e,

Comes hame, perhaps, to show a braw new
gown,

Or deposit her sair-won ¹² penny fee,
To help her parents dear, if they in hard-
ship be.

IV.

Wi' joy unfeign'd, brothers and sisters meet,
And each for other's weelfare kindly spiers: ¹³
The social hours, swift-wing'd, unnoticed
fleet :

Each tells the uncos ¹⁴ that he sees or
hears ;

The parents, partial, eye their hopeful
years ;

Anticipation forward points the view ;
The mother, wi' her needle an' her shears,
Gars ¹⁵ auld claes look amaist as weel's
the new ; —

The father mixes a' wi' admonition due.

9. Drive.

12. Hard-won.

10. Carefully.

13. Enquires.

15. Makes.

11. Trustworthy.

14. News.

The Cotter's Saturday Night

V.

Their master's an' their mistress's command,
The youngers a' are warned to obey :
“ An' mind their labours wi' an eydent¹⁶ hand,
An' ne'er, tho' out o' sight, to jauk or play :
An' O ! be sure to fear the Lord alway !
An' mind your duty, duly, morn an' night !
Lest in temptation's path ye gang astray,
Implore his counsel and assisting might :
They never sought in vain, that sought the
Lord aright ! ”

VI.

But hark ! a rap comes gently to the door ;
Jenny, wha kens the meaning o' the
same,
Tells how a neebor lad cam' o'er the moor,
To do some errands, and convoy her hame.
The wily mother sees the conscious flame
Sparkle in Jenny's e'e, and flush her
cheek ;
With heart-struck, anxious care, inquires
his name,
While Jenny hafflins¹⁷ is afraid to speak ;

16. Diligent.

17. Partly.

The Cotter's Saturday Night

Weel pleas'd the mother hears, it's nae wild,
worthless rake.

VII.

Wi' kindly welcome, Jenny brings him ben :¹⁸
A strappin' youth ; he tak's the mother's
eye ;

Blythe Jenny sees the visit's no ill ta'en ;
The father cracks of horses, pleughs, and
kye.¹⁹

The youngster's artless heart o'erflows wi'
joy,

But blate²⁰ and laithfu',²¹ scarce can weel
behave ;

The mother, wi' a woman's wiles, can spy
What makes the youth sae bashfu' an' sae
grave ;

Weel pleas'd to think her bairn's respected
like the lave.²²

VIII.

O happy love ! where love like this is found !
O heart-felt raptures ! — bliss beyond com-
pare !

18. Into the room.

19. Cattle.

20. Modest.

21. Bashful.

22. Others. That is, her neighbors' girls.

The Cotter's Saturday Night

I've pacèd much this weary, mortal round,
And sage experience bids me this declare —
“ If heaven a draught of heavenly pleasure
spare,
One cordial in this melancholy vale,
'Tis when a youthful, loving, modest pair,
In other's arms, breathe out the tender tale,
Beneath the milk-white thorn that scents the
ev'ning gale.”

IX.

Is there, in human form, that bears a heart —
A wretch ! a villain ! lost to love and truth !
That can, with studied, sly, ensnaring art,
Betray sweet Jenny's unsuspecting youth ?
Curse on his perjur'd arts ! dissembling smooth !
Are honour, virtue, conscience, all exil'd ?
Is there no pity, no relenting ruth,
Points to the parents fondling o'er their
child ?
Then paints the ruin'd maid, and their distraction wild ?

X.

But now the supper crowns their simple board,
The halesome parritch,²³ chief o' Scotia's
food :
The sowpe²⁴ their only Hawkie²⁵ does afford,

23. Wholesome porridge of oatmeal.

24. Little quantity of milk, here.

25. White-faced cow.

The Cotter's Saturday Night

That 'yont the hallan²⁶ snugly chows her
cood ;

The dame brings forth in complimentary mood
To grace the lad, her weel-hain'd²⁷ kebbuck²⁸
fell —

An' aft he's prest, an' aft he ca's it guid ;
The frugal wifie, garrulous, will tell,
How 'twas a towmond²⁹ auld, sin' lint was i'
the bell.³⁰

XI.

The cheerfu' supper done, wi' serious face,
They, round the ingle, form a circle wide ;
The sire turns o'er, wi' patriarchal grace,
The big ha'-Bible,³¹ ance his father's pride ;
His bonnet rev'rently is laid aside,
His lyart³² haffets³³ wearing thin an' bare ;
Those strains that once did sweet in Zion glide,
He wales³⁴ a portion with judicious care ;
And " Let us worship God ! " he says, with
solemn air.

26. Partition.

27. Carefully preserved.

28. Cheese.

29. A year — twelvemonth.

30. Since flax was in blossom.

31. Family Bible that was kept in the ha', the best room.

32. Gray.

33. Temples.

34. Chooses.

The Cotter's Saturday Night

XII.

They chant their artless notes in simple guise ;
They tune their hearts, by far the noblest
aim :

Perhaps Dundee's ³⁵ wild warbling measures rise,
Or plaintive Martyrs, ³⁵ worthy of the name,
Or noble Elgin ³⁵ beats ³⁶ the heav'nward flame,
The sweetest far of Scotia's holy lays :
Compared with these, Italian trills are tame ;
The tickl'd ears no heart-felt raptures raise ;
Nae unison hae they with our Creator's praise.

XIII.

The priest-like father reads the sacred page,
How Abram was the friend of God on high ;
Or, Moses bade eternal warfare wage
With Amalek's ungracious progeny ;
Or how the royal bard did groaning lie
Beneath the stroke of Heav'n's avenging ire ;
Or Job's pathetic plaint, and wailing cry ;
Or rapt Isaiah's wild, seraphic fire ;
Or other holy seers that tune the sacred lyre.

XIV.

Perhaps the Christian volume is the theme,
How guiltless blood for guilty man was shed ;

35. Scotch psalm tunes.

36. Increases.

The Cotter's Saturday Night

How He, who bore in heaven the second name,
Had not on earth whereon to lay his head;
How his first followers and servants sped;
The precepts sage they wrote to many a land:
How *he*,³⁷ who lone in Patmos banishèd,
Saw in the sun a mighty angel stand,
And heard great Bab'lon's doom pronounc'd
by Heaven's command.

XV.

Then kneeling down, to Heaven's Eternal
King,
The saint, the father, and the husband prays :
Hope “springs exulting on triumphant wing,” :
That thus they all shall meet in future days³⁸
There ever bask in uncreated rays,
No more to sigh, or shed the bitter tear,
Together hymning their Creator's praise,
In such society, yet still more dear ;
While circling time moves round in an eternal
sphere.

XVI.

Compar'd with this, how poor Religion's pride,
In all the pomp of method and of art,
When men display to congregations wide,
Devotion's ev'ry grace, except the heart !

37. John, the Evangelist.

38. Pope.

The Cotter's Saturday Night

The Pow'r, incensed, the pageant will desert,
The pompous strain, the sacerdotal stole ;
But, haply, in some cottage far apart,
May hear, well pleased, the language of the
soul ;
And in the book of life the inmates poor enroll.

XVII.

Then homeward all take off their sev'ral way ;
The youngling cottagers retire to rest :
The parent-pair their secret homage pay,
And proffer up to Heaven the warm request,
That He, who stills the raven's clam'rous nest,
And decks the lily fair in flow'ry pride,
Would, in the way his wisdom sees the best,
For them and for their little ones provide ;
But, chiefly, in their hearts with grace divine
preside.

XVIII.

From scenes like these, old Scotia's grandeur
springs,
That makes her lov'd at home, rever'd
abroad :
Princes and lords are but the breath of kings,
" An honest man's the noblest work of God :"
And certes,³⁹ in fair virtue's heavenly road,
The cottage leaves the palace far behind ;

39. Certainly.

The Cotter's Saturday Night

What is a lordling's pomp? — a cumbrous load,
Disguising oft the wretch of human kind,
Studied in arts of hell, in wickedness refin'd!

XIX.

O Scotia! my dear, my native soil!
For whom my warmest wish to Heaven is
sent!
Long may thy hardy sons of rustic toil
Be bless'd with health, and peace, and sweet
content!
And, O! may Heaven their simple lives pre-
vent
From luxury's contagion, weak and vile!
Then, howe'er crowns and coronets be rent,
A virtuous populace may rise the while,
And stand a wall of fire around their much-
lov'd isle.

XX.

O Thou! who poured the patriotic tide
That stream'd thro' Wallace's⁴⁰ undaunted
heart,
Who dared to nobly stem tyrannic pride,
Or nobly die, the second glorious part:
(The patriot's God peculiarly thou art,

⁴⁰. The national hero of Scotland who partially liberated his country from the rule of England but was finally defeated and executed in London in 1305.

The Cotter's Saturday Night

His friend, inspirer, guardian, and reward !)
O never, never, Scotia's realm desert ;
But still the patriot, and the patriot bard,
In bright succession raise, her ornament and
guard !



The Deserted Village

OLIVER GOLDSMITH

The Deserted Village

Sweet Auburn ! ¹ loveliest village of the plain,
Where health and plenty cheered the laboring
 swain,
Where smiling spring its earliest visit paid,
And parting summer's lingering blooms delayed:
Dear lovely bowers of innocence and ease,
Seats of my youth, when every sport could
 please,
How often have I loitered o'er thy green,
Where humble happiness endeared each scene !
How often have I paused on every charm,
The sheltered cot, the cultivated farm,
The never-failing brook, the busy mill,
The decent church that topt the neighboring
 hill,
The hawthorn bush, with seats beneath the
 shade,
For talking age and whispering lovers made !
How often have I blessed the coming day,
When toil remitting lent its turn to play,
And all the village train, from labor free,
Led up their sports beneath the spreading tree,

1. This is usually supposed to be the village of Lissoy where Henry Goldsmith, the poet's brother, was for many years the rector. Other commentators consider the town wholly imaginary.

The Deserted Village

While many a pastime circled in the shade,
The young contending as the old surveyed ;
And many a gambol frolicked o'er the ground,
And sleights of art and feats of strength went
 round :

And still, as each repeated pleasure tired,
Succeeding sports the mirthful band inspired ;
The dancing pair that simply sought renown
By holding out to tire each other down ;
The swain mistrustless of his smutted face,
While secret laughter tittered round the place ;
The bashful virgin's sidelong looks of love,
The matron's glance that would those looks
 reprove.

These were thy charms, sweet village ! sports
 like these,

With sweet succession, taught even toil to
 please ;

These round thy bowers their cheerful influence
 shed ;

These were thy charms — but all these charms
 are fled.

Sweet smiling village, loveliest of the lawn,
Thy sports are fled, and all thy charms with-
 drawn ;

Amidst thy bowers the tyrant hand is seen,
And desolation saddens all thy green :

The Deserted Village

One only master grasps the whole domain,
And half a tillage stints thy smiling plain.
No more thy glassy brook reflects the day,
But choked with sedges, works its weedy way ;
Along thy glades, a solitary guest,
The hollow-sounding bittern guards its nest ;
Amidst thy desert walks the lapwing flies,
And tires their echoes with unvaried cries.
Sunk are thy bowers in shapeless ruin all,
And the long grass o'ertops the mouldering
 wall;
And, trembling, shrinking from the spoiler's
 hand,
Far, far away, thy children leave the land.

Ill fares the land, to hastening ills a prey,
Where wealth accumulates, and men decay :
Princes and lords may flourish, or may fade—
A breath can make them, as a breath has
 made :

But a bold peasantry, their country's pride,
When once destroyed, can never be supplied.

A time there was, ere England's griefs began,
When every rood of ground maintained its
 man ;
For him light labor spread her wholesome
 store,

The Deserted Village

Just gave what life required, but gave no more :
His best companion, innocence and health,
And his best riches ignorance of wealth.

But times are altered ; trade's unfeeling train
Usurp the land, and dispossess the swain :
Along the lawn, where scattered hamlets rose,
Unwieldy wealth and cumbrous pomp repose ;
And every want to luxury allied,
And every pang that folly pays to pride.
Those gentle hours that plenty bade to bloom,
Those calm desires that asked but little room,
Those healthful sports that graced the peaceful scene,
Lived in each look, and brightened all the green ;
These, far departing, seek a kinder shore,
And rural mirth and manners are no more.

Sweet Auburn ! parent of the blissful hour,
Thy glades forlorn confess the tyrant's power.
Here, as I take my solitary rounds,
Amidst thy tangling walks and ruined grounds,
And, many a year elapsed, return to view
Where once the cottage stood, the hawthorn grew,
Remembrance wakes with all her busy train,
Swells at my breast, and turns the past to pain.

The Deserted Village

In all my wand'rings round this world of
care,
In all my griefs—and God has given my
share—

I still had hopes, my latest hours to crown,
Amidst these humble bowers to lay me down;
To husband out life's taper at the close,
And keep the flame from wasting by repose.
I still had hopes, for pride attends us still,
Amidst the swains to show my book-learned
skill,

Around my fire an evening group to draw,
And tell of all I felt, and all I saw;
And, as a hare, whom hounds and horns
pursue,

Pants to the place from whence at first he flew,
I still had hopes, my long vexations past,
Here to return—and die at home at last.

O blest retirement! friend to life's decline,
Retreats from care, that never must be mine,
How blest is he who crowns in shades like
these

A youth of labor with an age of ease;
Who quits a world where strong temptations
try,
And, since 'tis hard to combat, learns to fly!

The Deserted Village

For him no wretches, born to work and weep,
Explore the mine, or tempt the dangerous
deep ;

Nor surly porter stands, in guilty state,
To turn imploring famine from the gate ;
But on he moves to meet his latter end,
Angels around befriending virtue's friend ;
Sinks to the grave with unperceived decay,
While resignation gently slopes the way ;
And, all his prospects brightening to the last,
His heaven commences ere the world be past !

Sweet was the sound, when oft at evening's
close
Up yonder hill the village murmur rose ;
There, as I passed with careless steps and
slow,
The mingling notes came softened from below ;
The swain responsive as the milk-maid sung,
The sober herd that lowed to meet their young ;
The noisy geese that gabbled o'er the pool,
The playful children just let loose from school ;
The watch-dog's voice that bayed the whisper-
ing wind,
And the loud laugh that spoke the vacant mind ;

These all in sweet confusion sought the shade,
And filled each pause the nightingale had made.

The Deserted Village

But now the sounds of population fail,
No cheerful murmurs fluctuate in the gale,
No busy steps the grass-grown footway tread,
For all the blooming flush of life is fled.
All but yon widowed, solitary thing,
That feebly bends beside the plashy spring ;
She, wretched matron — forced in age, for
bread,
To strip the brook with mantling cresses
spread,
To pick her wintry faggot from the thorn,
To seek her nightly shed, and weep till morn —
She only left of all the harmless train,
The sad historian of the pensive plain !

Near yonder copse, where once the garden
smiled,
And still where many a garden flower grows
wild ;
There, where a few torn shrubs the place
disclose,
The village preacher's modest mansion rose.
A man he was to all the country dear,
And passing rich with forty pounds a year ;
Remote from towns he ran his godly race,
Nor e'er had changed, nor wished to change
his place ;
Unpracticed he to fawn, or seek for power,

The Deserted Village

By doctrines fashioned to the varying hour;
Far other aims his heart had learned to prize,
More skilled to raise the wretched than to rise.
His house was known to all the vagrant train,
He chid their wanderings, but relieved their
 pain ;

The long-remembered beggar was his guest,
Whose beard descending swept his aged breast;
The ruined spendthrift, now no longer proud,
Claimed kindred there, and had his claims
 allowed ;

The broken soldier, kindly bade to stay,
Sat by his fire, and talked the night away,
Wept o'er his wounds, or, tales of sorrow done,
Shouldered his crutch and showed how fields
 were won.

Pleased with his guests, the good man learned
 to glow,
And quite forgot their vices in their woe ;
Careless their merits or their faults to scan,
His pity gave ere charity began.

Thus to relieve the wretched was his pride,
And e'en his failings leaned to virtue's side ;
But in his duty, prompt at every call,
He watched and wept, he prayed and felt for all ;
And, as a bird each fond endearment tries
To tempt its new-fledged offspring to the skies,

The Deserted Village

He tried each art, reproved each dull delay,
Allured to brighter worlds, and led the way.

Beside the bed where parting life was laid,
And sorrow, guilt, and pain, by turns dismayed,
The reverend champion stood. At his control
Despair and anguish fled the struggling soul ;
Comfort came down the trembling wretch to
raise,
And his last faltering accents whispered praise.

At church, with meek and unaffected grace,
His looks adorned the venerable place ;
Truth from his lips prevailed with double sway,
And fools, who came to scoff, remained to
pray.

The service past, around the pious man,
With ready zeal, each honest rustic ran ;
E'en children followed, with endearing wile,
And plucked his gown, to share the good man's
smile :

His ready smile a parent's warmth expressed,
Their welfare pleased him, and their cares
distressed ;

To them his heart, his love, his griefs were
given,

But all his serious thoughts had rest in heaven :
As some tall cliff that lifts its awful form,

The Deserted Village

Swells from the vale, and midway leaves the
storm,
Though round its breast the rolling clouds are
spread,
Eternal sunshine settles on its head.

Beside yon straggling fence that skirts the
way

With blossomed furze unprofitably gay —
There, in his noisy mansion, skilled to rule,
The village master taught his little school ;
A man severe he was, and stern to view,
I knew him well, and every truant knew ;
Well had the boding tremblers learned to trace
The day's disasters in his morning face ;
Full well they laughed with counterfeited glee
At all his jokes, for many a joke had he ;
Full well the busy whisper, circling round,
Conveyed the dismal tidings when he frowned ;
Yet he was kind, or if severe in aught,
The love he bore to learning was in fault.
The village all declared how much he knew ;
'Twas certain he could write, and cipher too ;
Lands he could measure, terms and tides
presage,
And even the story ran that he could gauge.
In arguing, too, the parson owned his skill,
For e'en though vanquished, he could argue
still ;

The Deserted Village

While words of learned length and thund'ring
 sound
Amazed the gazing rustics ranged around,
And still they gazed, and still the wonder grew
That one small head should carry all he knew.

But past is all his fame. The very spot,
Where many a time he triumphed, is forgot.
Near yonder thorn that lifts its head on high,
Where once the sign-post caught the passing
 eye,
Low lies that house where nut-brown draughts
 inspired,
Where gray-beard mirth and smiling toil
 retired,
Where village statesmen talked with looks
 profound,
And news much older than their ale went
 round.
Imagination fondly stoops to trace
The parlor splendors of that festive place ;
The white-washed wall, the nicely sanded floor,
The varnished clock that clicked behind the
 door ;
The chest contrived a double debt to pay,
A bed by night, a chest of drawers by day ;
The pictures placed for ornament and use,

The Deserted Village

The twelve good rules,² the royal game of
goose;³
The hearth, except when winter chilled the
day,
With aspen boughs, and flowers and fennel gay;
While broken teacups, wisely kept for show,
Ranged o'er the chimney, glistened in a row.

Vain transitory splendors ! could not all
Reprieve the tottering mansion from its fall ?
Obscure it sinks, nor shall it more impart
An hour's importance to the poor man's heart;
Thither no more the peasant shall repair
To sweet oblivion of his daily care;
No more the farmer's news, the barber's tale,
No more the woodman's ballad shall prevail ;
No more the smith his dusky brow shall clear,
Relax his ponderous strength and lean to hear ;
The host himself no longer shall be found
Careful to see the mantling bliss go round ;
Nor the coy maid, half-willing to be pressed,
Shall kiss the cup to pass it to the rest.

Yes ! let the rich deride, the proud disdain,
These simple blessings of the lowly train,
To me more dear, congenial to my heart,

2. Twelve rules relating to health, honesty, and domestic happiness, said to have been written by Charles I.

3. A game played with dice.

The Deserted Village

One native charm, than all the gloss of art;
Spontaneous joys, where nature has its play,
The soul adopts, and owns their first-born
 sway :

Lightly they frolic o'er the vacant mind,
Unenvied, unmolested, unconfined.
But the long pomp, the midnight masquerade,
With all the freaks of wanton wealth arrayed,
In these, ere triflers half their wish obtain,
The toiling pleasure sickens into pain;
And, even while fashion's brightest arts decoy,
The heart distrusting asks, if this be joy?

Ye friends to truth, ye statesmen who survey
The rich man's power increase, the poor's
 decay,

'Tis yours to judge how wide the limits stand
Between a splendid and a happy land.
Proud swells the tide with loads of freighted
 ore,

And shouting Folly hails them from the shore ;
Hoards even beyond the miser's wish abound,
And rich men flock from all the world around.
Yet count our gains : this wealth is but a name,
That leaves our useful products still the same.
Not so the loss. The man of wealth and
 pride

Takes up a space, that many poor supplied ;

The Deserted Village

Space for his lake, his park's extended bounds,
Space for his horses, equipage, and hounds :
The robe that wraps his limbs in silken cloth
Has robb'd the neighboring fields of half their
growth ;

His seat, where solitary sports are seen,
Indignant spurns the cottage green ;
Around the world each needful product flies,
For all the luxuries the world supplies.
While thus the land, adorn'd for pleasure, all
In barren splendor feebly waits the fall.

As some fair female, unadorn'd and plain,
Secure to please while youth confirms her
reign,
Slight every borrowed charm that dress
supplies,
Nor shares with art the triumph of her eyes ;
But when those charms are past, for charms
are frail,
When time advances, and when lovers fail,
She then shines forth, solicitous to bless,
In all the glaring impotence of dress ;
Thus fares the land, by luxury betrayed :
In nature's simplest charms at first arrayed,
But verging to decline, its splendors rise,
Its vistas strike, its palaces surprise ;
While, scourged by famine, from the smiling
land

The Deserted Village

The mournful peasant leads his humble band ;
And while he sinks, without one arm to save,
The country blooms — a garden and a grave.

Where then, ah ! where shall poverty reside,
To 'scape the pressure of contiguous pride ?
If to some common's fenceless limits strayed
He drives his flocks to pick the scanty blade,
Those fenceless fields the sons of wealth
divide,

And e'en the bare-worn common is denied.
If to the city sped — what waits him there ?
To see profusion that he must not share ;
To see ten thousand baneful arts combined
To pamper luxury and thin mankind ;
To see each joy the sons of pleasure know,
Extorted from his fellow-creature's woe ;
Here, while the courtier glitters in brocade,
There, the pale artist plies the sickly trade ;
Here, while the proud their long-drawn pomps
display,

There, the black gibbet glooms beside the way.
The dome where pleasure holds her midnight
reign,

Here, richly decked, admits the gorgeous train ;
Tumultuous grandeur crowds the blazing
square,

The rattling chariots clash, the torches glare.
Sure scenes like these no troubles e'er annoy ;

The Deserted Village

Sure these denote one universal joy !
Are these thy serious thoughts? — Ah ! turn
 thine eyes
Where the poor, houseless, shivering female
 lies.

She once, perhaps, in village plenty blessed,
Has wept at tales of innocence distressed ;
Her modest looks the cottage might adorn,
Sweet as the primrose peeps beneath the thorn ;
Now lost to all ; her friends, her virtue fled,
Near her betrayer's door she lays her head —
And, pinched with cold, and shrinking from
 the shower,

With heavy heart deplores that luckless hour,
When idly first, ambitious of the town,
She left her wheel and robes of country brown.

Do thine, sweet Auburn ! thine the loveliest
 train,
Do thy fair tribes participate her pain ?
E'en now, perhaps, by cold and hunger led,
At proud men's doors they ask a little bread.

Ah, no ! To distant climes, a dreary scene,
Where half the convex world intrudes between,
Through torrid tracts with fainting steps they
 go,
Where wild Altama⁴ murmurs to their woe.

4. Altamaha.

The Deserted Village

Far different there from all that charmed
before,
The various terrors of that horrid shore;
Those blazing suns that dart a downward ray,
And fiercely shed intolerable day ;
Those matted woods where birds forget to sing ;
But silent bats in drowsy clusters cling ;
Those poisonous fields with rank luxuriance
crowned,
Where the dark scorpion gathers death around ;
Where at each step the stranger fears to wake
The rattling terrors of the vengeful snake ;
Where crouching tigers wait their hapless prey,
And savage men more murderous still than
they ;
While oft in whirls the mad tornado flies,
Mingling the ravaged landscape with the skies.
Far different these from every former scene,
The cooling brook, the grassy-vested green,
The breezy covert of the warbling grove,
That only sheltered thefts of harmless love.

Good Heaven ! what sorrows gloomed that
parting day,
That called them from their native walks away ;
When the poor exiles, every pleasure past,
Hung round the bowers, and fondly looked
their last —

The Deserted Village

And took a long farewell, and wished in vain
For seats like these beyond the western main —
And, shuddering still to face the distant deep,
Returned and wept, and still returned to weep.
The good old sire the first prepared to go
To new-found worlds, and wept for others'
 woe ;

But for himself, in conscious virtue brave,
He only wished for worlds beyond the grave.

His lovely daughter, lovelier in her tears,
The fond companion of his helpless years,
Silent went next, neglectful of her charms,
And left a lover's for a father's arms.
With louder plaints the mother spoke her
 woes,
And blessed the cot where every pleasure rose,
And kissed her thoughtless babes with many a
 tear,
And clasped them close, in sorrow doubly dear ;
Whilst her fond husband strove to lend relief
In all the silent manliness of grief.

O luxury ! thou curst by Heaven's decree,
How ill exchanged are things like these for
 thee !
How do thy potions, with insidious joy,
Diffuse their pleasures only to destroy !

The Deserted Village

Kingdoms, by thee to sickly greatness grown,
Boast of a florid vigour not their own :
At every draught more large and large they
grow,
A bloated mass of rank unwieldy woe ;
Till, sapped their strength, and every part un-
sound,
Down, down they sink, and spread a ruin
round.

Even now the devastation is begun,
And half the business of destruction done ;
Even now, methinks, as pondering here I
stand,
I see the rural virtues leave the land.
Down where yon anchoring vessel spreads the
sail
That idly waiting flaps with every gale,
Downward they move, a melancholy band,
Pass from the shore, and darken all the strand.
Contented toil, and hospitable care,
And kind connubial tenderness are there,
And piety with wishes placed above,
And steady loyalty, and faithful love.
And thou, sweet Poetry, thou loveliest maid,
Still first to fly where sensual joys invade ;
Unfit, in these degenerate times of shame,
To catch the heart, or strike for honest fame :

The Deserted Village

Dear charming nymph, neglected and decried,
My shame in crowds, my solitary pride ;
Thou source of all my bliss, and all my woe,
Thou found'st me poor at first, and keep'st
me so ;

Thou guide, by which the noble arts excel,
Thou nurse of every virtue, fare thee well !
Farewell ; and oh ! where'er thy voice be tried,
On Torno's cliffs,⁵ or Pambamarca's⁶ side,
Whether where equinoctial fervors glow,
Or winter wraps the polar world in snow,
Still let thy voice, prevailing over time,
Redress the rigors of the inclement clime ;
Aid slighted truth with thy persuasive strain ;
Teach erring man to spurn the rage of gain ;
Teach him, that states of native strength pos-
sessed,

Though very poor, may still be very blest ;
That trade's proud empire hastes to swift
decay,

As ocean sweeps the labored mole away ;
While self-dependent power can time defy,
As rocks resist the billows and the sky.⁷

5. Cliffs about Lake Tornea in northern Sweden.

6. A peak in the Andes of Ecuador.

7. It is said that the last four lines were added by Dr. Johnson.

Studies

Make a study of the descriptive passages in this poem. Both places and persons are described. For instance, there is the tavern: What is the "thorn that lifts its head on high"? What were the "nut-brown draughts"? What idea is given by "gray-beard mirth"? What by "smiling toil"? What idea of the times is given by "news much older than their ale"? What three classes of men are represented as frequenting the ale-house? Are young men present? Where are they at this time? Create a picture of the parlor. Was the wall lathed and plastered? Why was the floor sanded? What propriety is there in speaking of it as *nicely* sanded? Why should he mention the fact that the clock was varnished? Why say the clock *clicked*? Would it not be more natural to say it *ticked*? How does the clock look to you? Goldsmith tells us but three things: it was varnished, it clicked, it was behind the door. Did you ever see a clock in such a place? Was this high on the shelf behind the door? Can you see a "chest of drawers" that might be used as a bed at night? What connection can pictures have with "the royal game of goose"? How can pictures be for both ornament and use? Can you see the fireplace filled with blazing logs in winter and in summer decked

Studies

out with flowers and green branches? Do you see the broken teacups above the fire-place? Now have you pictured clearly to yourself the whole interior?

The village preacher is described: What *facts* do you learn about his personal appearance? Was he young or old? Was he rich or poor? Was he ambitious? What lines tell you? How many of his guests are mentioned? Was the first young or old? Why did the second claim kindred? What picture is suggested by the words "Shouldered his crutch and showed how fields were won"? Was the pastor generous? Was he wise in giving? What were the failings that leaned to virtue's side? Was he sympathetic? Was he willing to work for others? Did he drive his flock? Did he encourage them to do right? What reason is there for calling him a "reverend champion"? Did he ever abandon the sinful? How did he appear in the pulpit? Was he an eloquent preacher? Did his words carry weight with his congregation? Was he popular with his people? Were young and old alike his friends? What was the reason for the love the people bore him? What is the effect of the figure of speech in the last sentence descriptive of the parson? Does the preacher seem a very real person to you? Has Goldsmith accomplished this by detailed description or by suggestive words and happy figures? Is this a bit of real description?

Studies

Now in a similar way study the village schoolmaster. Compare him with the preacher. Compare the manner in which Goldsmith describes the two. Select several other descriptive passages. Which is the finest in the poem?

Does unity characterize the poem? What is the main idea, the one that binds its parts together? Are the parts consistent with the whole? Are the stanzas units? Does one stanza follow another logically? What is the effect of stanzas of such various length? What kind of a poem is this? Is it a poem of the past? Has it any bearing on the present? What political or social ideas has it? Would such a schoolmaster be popular to-day? Would such a preacher have as great an influence to-day in one of your villages? What is said about luxury, about poetry, about wealth, about trade, about retirement? Do you feel that the poem has repaid the study you have given it?

The Widow and Her Son

WASHINGTON IRVING



The Widow and Her Son

Pittie olde age, within whose silver haire
Honour and reverence evermore have raign'd.

MARLOWE'S *Tamburlaine*.

During my residence in the country, I used frequently to attend at the old village church. Its shadowy aisles, its mouldering monuments, its dark oaken paneling, all reverend with the gloom of departed years, seemed to fit it for the haunt of solemn meditation. A Sunday, too, in the country, is so holy in its repose, such a pensive quiet reigns over the face of Nature, that every restless passion is charmed down, and we feel all the natural religion of the soul gently springing up within us.

“Sweet day, so pure, so calm, so bright,
The bridal of the earth and sky !”

I cannot lay claim to the merit of being a devout man ; but there are feelings that visit me in a country church, amid the beautiful serenity of Nature, which I experience nowhere else ; and if not a more religious, I think I am a better man on Sunday than on any other day of the seven.

But in this church I felt myself continually

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thrown back upon the world by the frigidity and pomp of the poor worms around me. The only being that seemed thoroughly to feel the humble and prostrate piety of a true Christian was a poor decrepit old woman, bending under the weight of years and infirmities. She bore the traces of something better than abject poverty. The lingerings of decent pride were visible in her appearance. Her dress, though humble in the extreme, was scrupulously clean. Some trivial respect, too, had been awarded her, for she did not take her seat among the village poor, but sat alone on the steps of the altar. She seemed to have survived all love, all friendship, all society, and to have nothing left her but the hopes of heaven. When I saw her feebly rising and bending her aged form in prayer ; habitually conning her prayer-book, which her palsied and failing eyes could not permit her to read, but which she evidently knew by heart, I felt persuaded that the faltering voice of that poor woman arose to heaven far before the responses of the clerk, the swell of the organ, or the chanting of the choir.

I am fond of loitering about country churches ; and this was so delightfully situated, that it frequently attracted me. It stood on a knoll, round which a small stream made a beautiful

The Widow and Her Son

bend, and then wound its way through a long reach of soft meadow scenery. The church was surrounded by yew trees, which seemed almost coeval with itself. Its tall Gothic spire shot up lightly from among them, with rooks and crows generally wheeling about it. I was seated there one still, sunny morning, watching two laborers who were digging a grave. They had chosen one of the most remote and neglected corners of the churchyard, where, by the number of nameless graves around, it would appear that the indigent and friendless were huddled into the earth. I was told that the new-made grave was for the only son of a poor widow. While I was meditating on the distinctions of worldly rank, which extend thus down into the very dust, the toll of the bell announced the approach of the funeral. They were the obsequies of poverty, with which pride had nothing to do. A coffin of the plainest materials, without pall or other covering, was borne by some of the villagers. The sexton walked before with an air of cold indifference. There were no mock mourners in the trappings of affected woe, but there was one real mourner who feebly tottered after the corpse. It was the aged mother of the deceased—the poor old woman whom I had

The Widow and Her Son

seen seated on the steps of the altar. She was supported by an humble friend, who was endeavoring to comfort her. A few of the neighboring poor had joined the train, and some children of the village were running hand in hand, now shouting with unthinking mirth, and now pausing to gaze, with childish curiosity, on the grief of the mourner.

As the funeral train approached the grave, the parson issued from the church porch, arrayed in the surplice, with prayer-book in hand, and attended by the clerk. The service, however, was a mere act of charity. The deceased had been destitute, and the survivor was penniless. It was shuffled through, therefore, in form, but coldly and unfeelingly. The well-fed priest moved but a few steps from the church door ; his voice could scarcely be heard at the grave ; and never did I hear the funeral service, that sublime and touching ceremony, turned into such a frigid mummary of words.

I approached the grave. The coffin was placed on the ground. On it were inscribed the name and age of the deceased — “George Somers, aged twenty-six years.” The poor mother had been assisted to kneel down at the head of it. Her withered hands were

The Widow and Her Son

clasped, as if in prayer ; but I could perceive, by a feeble rocking of the body, and a convulsive motion of the lips, that she was gazing on the last relics of her son with the yearnings of a mother's heart.

Preparations were made to deposit the coffin in the earth. There was that bustling stir, which breaks so harshly on the feelings of grief and affection ; directions given in the cold tones of business ; the striking of spades into sand and gravel ; which, at the grave of those we love, is of all sounds the most withering. The bustle around seemed to waken the mother from a wretched reverie. She raised her glazed eyes, and looked about with a faint wildness. As the men approached with cords to lower the coffin into the grave, she wrung her hands, and broke into an agony of grief. The poor woman who attended her took her by the arm, endeavoring to raise her from the earth and to whisper something like consolation — “Nay, now — nay, now — don't take it so sorely to heart.” She could only shake her head, and wring her hands, as one not to be comforted.

As they lowered the body into the earth, the creaking of the cords seemed to agonize her ; but when, on some accidental obstruction,

The Widow and Her Son

there was a jostling of the coffin, all the tenderness of the mother burst forth ; as if any harm could come to him who was far beyond the reach of worldly suffering.

I could see no more — my heart swelled into my throat — my eyes filled with tears — I felt as if I were acting a barbarous part in standing by and gazing idly on this scene of maternal anguish. I wandered to another part of the churchyard, where I remained until the funeral train had dispersed.

When I saw the mother slowly and painfully quitting the grave, leaving behind her the remains of all that was dear to her on earth, and returning to silence and destitution, my heart ached for her. What, thought I, are the distresses of the rich ? They have friends to soothe — pleasures to beguile — a world to divert and dissipate their griefs. What are the sorrows of the young ? Their growing minds soon close above the wound — their elastic spirits soon rise beneath the pressure — their green and ductile affections soon twine around new objects. But the sorrows of the poor, who have no outward appliances to soothe — the sorrows of the aged, with whom life at best is but a wintry day, and who can look for no aftergrowth of joy — the

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sorrows of a widow, aged, solitary, destitute, mourning over an only son, the last solace of her years ;—these are indeed sorrows which make us feel the impotency of consolation.

It was some time before I left the churchyard. On my way homeward, I met with the woman who had acted as comforter ; she was just returning from accompanying the mother to her lonely habitation, and I drew from her some particulars connected with the affecting scene I had witnessed.

The parents of the deceased had resided in the village from childhood. They had inhabited one of the neatest cottages, and by various rural occupations, and the assistance of a small garden, had supported themselves creditably, and comfortably, and led a happy and a blameless life. They had one son, who had grown up to be the staff and pride of their age —“ Oh, sir !” said the good woman, “ he was such a comely lad, so sweet-tempered, so kind to everyone around him, so dutiful to his parents ! It did one’s heart good to see him of a Sunday, drest out in his best, so tall, so straight, so cheery, supporting his old mother to church — for she was always fonder of leaning on George’s arm than on her good man’s ; and poor soul, she might well be proud of

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him, for a finer lad there was not in the country round."

Unfortunately, the son was tempted, during a year of scarcity and agricultural hardship, to enter into the service of one of the small craft that plied on a neighboring river. He had not been long in this employ, when he was entrapped by a press-gang, and carried off to sea. His parents received tidings of his seizure, but beyond that they could learn nothing. It was the loss of their main prop. The father, who was already infirm, grew heartless and melancholy, and sunk into his grave. The widow, left lonely in her age and feebleness, could no longer support herself, and came upon the parish. Still there was a kind of feeling towards her throughout the village, and a certain respect as being one of the oldest inhabitants. As no one applied for the cottage in which she had passed so many happy days, she was permitted to remain in it, where she lived solitary and almost helpless. The few wants of nature were chiefly supplied from the scanty productions of her little garden, which the neighbors would now and then cultivate for her. It was but a few days before the time at which these circumstances were told me, that she was gathering some vegetables

The Widow and Her Son

for her repast, when she heard the cottage-door which faced the garden suddenly opened. A stranger came out, and seemed to be looking eagerly and wildly around. He was dressed in seamen's clothes, was emaciated and ghastly pale, and bore the air of one broken by sickness and hardships. He saw her, and hastened towards her, but his steps were faint and faltering ; he sank on his knees before her, and sobbed like a child. The poor woman gazed upon him with a vacant and wandering eye—"Oh my dear, dear mother ! don't you know your son ? your poor boy George ?" It was, indeed, the wreck of her once noble lad ; who, shattered by wounds, by sickness, and foreign imprisonment, had, at length, dragged his wasted limbs homeward, to repose among the scenes of his childhood.

I will not attempt to detail the particulars of such a meeting, where sorrow and joy were so completely blended : still he was alive ! — he was come home ! — he might yet live to comfort and cherish her old age ! Nature, however, was exhausted in him ; and if anything had been wanting to finish the work of fate, the desolation of his native cottage would have been sufficient. He stretched himself on

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the pallet on which his widowed mother had passed many a sleepless night, and he never rose from it again.

The villagers, when they heard that George Somers had returned, crowded to see him, offering every comfort and assistance that their humble means afforded. He was too weak, however, to talk—he could only look his thanks. His mother was his constant attendant, and he seemed unwilling to be helped by any other hand.

There is something in sickness that breaks down the pride of manhood ; that softens the heart, and brings it back to the feelings of infancy. Who that has languished, even in advanced life, in sickness and despondency ; who that has pined on a weary bed in the neglect and loneliness of a foreign land ; but has thought on the mother that “looked on his childhood,” that smoothed his pillow, and administered to his helplessness ? Oh ! there is an enduring tenderness in the love of a mother to a son, that transcends all other affections of the heart. It is neither to be chilled by selfishness, nor daunted by danger, nor weakened by worthlessness, nor stifled by ingratitude. She will sacrifice every comfort to his convenience ; she will surrender every pleasure

The Widow and Her Son

to his enjoyment; she will glory in his fame, and exult in his prosperity ;—and, if misfortune overtake him, he will be the dearer to her from misfortune ; and if disgrace settle upon his name, she will still love and cherish him in spite of his disgrace ; and if all the world beside cast him off, she will be all the world to him.

Poor George Somers had known what it was to be in sickness, and none to soothe—lonely and in prison, and none to visit him. He could not endure his mother from his sight ; if she moved away, his eye would follow her. She would sit for hours by his bed, watching him as he slept. Sometimes he would start from a feverish dream, and look anxiously up until he saw her bending over him, when he would take her hand, lay it on his bosom, and fall asleep with the tranquillity of a child. In this way he died.

My first impulse, on hearing this humble tale of affliction, was to visit the cottage of the mourner, and administer pecuniary assistance, and if possible, comfort. I found, however, on inquiry, that the good feelings of the villagers had prompted them to do everything that the case admitted ; and as the poor know best how to console each other's sorrows, I did not venture to intrude.

The Widow and Her Son

The next Sunday I was at the village church ; when, to my surprise, I saw the poor old woman tottering down the aisle to her accustomed seat on the steps of the altar.

She had made an effort to put on something like mourning for her son ; and nothing could be more touching than this struggle between pious affection and utter poverty : a black ribbon or so — a faded black handkerchief — and one or two more such humble attempts to express by outward sign that grief which passes show.—When I looked round upon the storied monuments, the stately hatchments, the cold marble pomp, with which grandeur mourned magnificently over departed pride, and turned to this poor widow, bowed down by age and sorrow at the altar of her God, and offering up the prayers and praises of a pious, though a broken heart, I felt that this living monument of real grief was worth them all.

I related her story to some of the wealthy members of the congregation, and they were moved by it. They exerted themselves to render her situation more comfortable, and to lighten her afflictions. It was, however, but smoothing a few steps to the grave. In the course of a Sunday or two after, she was missed from her usual seat at church, and be-

The Widow and Her Son

fore I left the neighborhood, I heard, with a feeling of satisfaction, that she had quietly breathed her last, and had gone to rejoin those she loved, in that world where sorrow is never known, and friends are never parted.

Home Thoughts, from Abroad

ROBERT BROWNING

Oh, to be in England now that April's there,
And whoever wakes in England sees, some
 morning, unaware, [sheaf
That the lowest boughs and the brushwood
Round the elm-tree bole are in tiny leaf
While the chaffinch sings on the orchard
 bough
In England — now !

And after April, when May follows,
And the white-throat builds, and all the
 swallows !
Hark, where my blossomed pear-tree in the
 hedge
Leans to the field and scatters on the clover
Blossoms and dewdrops—at the bent spray's
 edge—
That's the wise thrush: he sings each song
 twice over,
Lest you should think he never could recapture
The first fine careless rapture ! [dew,
And though the fields look rough with hoary
All will be gay when noontide wakes anew
The buttercups, the little children's dower
—Far brighter than this gaudy melon flower !

Biographical Sketches

JOHN KEATS

CHARLES DICKENS

OLIVER GOLDSMITH

John Keats

1795-1821

Not long before his death Keats wrote, — “If I should die, I have left no immortal work behind me, nothing to make my friends proud of my memory, but I have loved the principle of beauty in all things, and if I had had time I would have made myself remembered.” He is remembered, is famous, and the other sentence he framed as he lay dying, the epitaph on his tombstone in the Protestant cemetery at Rome, is as mistaken as the fear that prompted it: “Here lies one whose name was writ in water.” He was not twenty-six years of age when he died, but he had written a few perfect poems and had exerted a permanent influence on the poetry of his language.

What a mournful tragedy his life was! His father was a hostler in a livery stable and Keats's boyhood was passed in London. His parents were ambitious for their children but died when John was a boy. He was apprenticed to a surgeon but disliking surgery immensely he quarreled with his master just before the expiration of his term. At nineteen all his interests centered in poetry, and at twenty-one he decided to devote himself exclusively to it.

Always delicate in health and nervous in temperament, everything he undertook was done

John Keats

at the highest tension and in a manner most unsatisfactory to himself. He was an extremist in everything and his inability to accomplish what his ambition prompted was a source of constant irritation. But it was an irritation with himself that never reacted upon his friends and no one ever had friends whose devotion was so absolute and unselfish. "Sensitiveness and self-analysis were striking characteristics and though he often resolved to free himself from his morbid musings he could not throw off their thrall."

A long pedestrian trip through the English lake region and Scotland, taken with the hope of improving his health, was too arduous an undertaking and brought on the first symptoms of his fatal malady. On his return he nursed a brother through a fatal illness and suffered acutely in his sympathetic soul.

About this time he met the young woman with whom he fell desperately in love, whose image haunted him always and to whom he addressed passionate letters in his absence from her. Tormenting himself with his high aspirations which he felt he could scarcely realize, hounded by heartless critics who sneered at his pretensions and ridiculed his poetry, passionately in love but too proud to accept assistance and too sincere to marry with no assured income, and facing the certainty of ill health, is it any wonder that life was a burden to him and that when the first hemorrhage came from his lungs he recognized his death-warrant?

John Keats

Though kind friends surrounded him and tended him with a devotion that has no parallel, he steadily declined. A journey to Italy did little to relieve him and, suffering all the pangs of disappointed ambition and a hopeless love, he looked forward to death as a release, wondered when this "posthumous life" of his would come to an end and "felt the flowers growing over him." His friend Severn, who tended him with such assiduous care wrote — "about four the approaches of death came on. 'Severn — I — lift me up — I am dying — I shall die easy ; don't be frightened — be firm and thank God it has come.' I lifted him up in my arms — when he gradually sank into death, so quiet that I still thought he slept."

Keats's love of the beautiful was the inspiration of his life and of his poetry. The two years that preceded his first violent attack of illness were the period of his most finished work and what was written during that interval is thoroughly in keeping with his ideal. It is beautiful in form and in rhythm, and shows such a felicitous choice of word and figure that it charms the reader's every sense. Where can be found anything equal to the beauty of his *Ode on a Grecian Urn*, *To a Nightingale*, *On Indolence* and *To Psyche*? And then the matchless *Ode to Autumn* :

Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness,

Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun ;
Conspiring with him now to load and bless

John Keats

With fruit the vines that round the thatch-
eaves run ;
To bend with apples the moss'd cottage trees,
And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core ;
To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel
shells
With a sweet kernel ; to set budding more,
And still more, later flowers for the bees,
Until they think warm days will never cease,
For Summer has o'er-brimmed their
clammy cells.

Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy store ?
Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find
Thee sitting careless on a granary floor,
Thy hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind ;
Or on a half-reaped furrow, sound asleep
Drows'd with the fume of poppies, while
thy hook
Spares the next swath and all its twined
flowers ;
And sometimes like a gleaner thou dost keep
Steady thy laden head across a brook ;
Or by a cider-press, with patient look,
Thou watchest the last oozy hours by
hours.

Where are the songs of Spring? Ay, where
are they?

John Keats

Think not of them, thou hast thy music too—
While barred clouds bloom the soft-dying day,
And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hues ;
Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn
Among the river shallows, borne aloft
Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies ;
And full-grown lambs loud bleat from hilly
bourn ;
Hedge crickets sing ; and now with treble
soft
The red-breast whistles from a garden-croft ;
And gathering swallows twitter in the
skies.

Whence came so delicate an appreciation of nature to the son of the city hostler? Where did he learn to see and to feel the bountifulness of the harvest, the rich season of fruitage? That first stanza is instinct with the life of generous autumn. But the second is different, though still preserving the most perfect unity of thought. It is the literary stanza, the stanza which gives rein to the imagination and clothes the spirit of autumn with a personality as vital and as graceful as classic models can furnish.

“Thy hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind.” But autumn is not bounteous only, nor is the classic spirit of rest its only sentiment. There is a hint of the maturity that precedes decay, a pensive feeling that all must change, a premonition of

John Keats

the approaching winter. The birds no longer sing, the small gnats see death approaching, the lambs are full-grown, the swallows are gathering for their long flight. If one cannot catch the poetic spirit of these stanzas he knows not Autumn or is not sensitive to the power of words.

Of his longer poems *Endymion* was the first and the one that called forth the biting criticism of his opponents. He realized its imperfections fully and criticised it as he did his other poems with an unfailing judgment. But he offered no apology, for he felt and said that he had done his best. *Hyperion*, *The Eve of St. Agnes* and *Lamia* are more mature poems, and mark the height of his powers and the beginning of their decline. Keats desired to win fame as a dramatist but his efforts in that direction were not a success. It is upon his lyrics that his fame rests, a fame that will be as lasting as the language itself.

The pathetic story of his life is essential to a thorough appreciation of his art, but he has not given us in his writings much trace of the incidents of his sorrowful career. Poetry was his very existence — he loved it and he lived it. His verses were as dear to him as his own heart's blood and a fame that rested on imperfect performance would have been more difficult to bear than the contemptuous jibes of his arrogant critics.

Speaking of one of the poet's most characteristic powers Lowell says: "Keats had an instinct for

John Keats

fine words, which are in themselves pictures and ideas, and had more the power of poetic expression than any modern English poet. And by poetic expression I do not mean merely a vividness in particulars, but the right feeling which heightens or subdues a passage or a whole poem to the proper tone and gives entireness to the effect. There is a great deal more than is commonly supposed in this choice of words. Men's thoughts and opinions are in a great degree vassals of him who invents a new phrase or reapplies an old epithet. . . . We reward the discoverer of an anesthetic for the body and make him member of all the societies, but him who finds a nepenthe for the soul we elect into the academy of the immortals."

Charles Dickens

1812-1870

Charles Dickens, the son of a clerk in the Navy Pay Office, was born at Portsea, England, in 1812. The father seemed entirely unfit to support his large family and when he moved with them into London his meager salary was less and less able to meet their demands. Little by little the family possessions went to satisfy creditors and finally when Charles was about twelve years of age everything had disappeared and the father was cast into prison for debt. The future novelist was left to take care of himself and learned by bitter experience the sufferings of the poor in a great city. What he could earn was a mere pittance and he often knew the pangs of hunger and suffered the weakness of an underfed child. It was a bitter struggle for bare subsistence and produced its effect upon the genius of the author for many of his characters are drawn from the poor with whom he was thrown in contact.

He had been a delicate and sickly child, but withal one of sweet disposition and winning ways. It is remarkable that he was not seriously corrupted by his associations, that he held manfully through life to the principles he formulated in childhood: "Whatever I have tried to do in life I have tried with all my heart to do well. What I

Charles Dickens

have devoted myself to, I have devoted myself to completely. Never to put one hand to anything on which I could throw my whole self, and never to affect depreciation of my work, whatever it was."

Ultimately the father obtained a good situation and Dickens following in his father's footsteps took up with great vigor the study of shorthand. With little assistance and no encouragement he worked away determinedly and at nineteen was a reporter in the House of Parliament for one of the city dailies.

His first original article or story was printed in 1834 and with it began his literary career, for reporting became at once a burdensome task.

His marriage occurred in 1836. About twenty years later, after his wife had borne him ten children, there was a separation, the eldest son going with the mother while the rest of the children remained with him and were cared for by their mother's sister who had been with them for many years. The incompatibility which separated them may not unlikely have been increased by the strange and violent attachment Dickens conceived early in his married life for another sister-in-law who died at the age of seventeen after having lived in the family. Dickens's extravagant love for this girl and his subsequent devotion to her memory could not have been a pleasant thing for the mother of his children to contemplate.

Charles Dickens

She is the original of *Little Nell* in *Old Curiosity Shop* and Dickens poured his soul into drawing that perfect character. He could not write of her without being strongly affected and to describe the death of *Little Nell* was to live again through his sufferings when Mary died.

He grew wealthy from the sale of his books, read from them before large audiences and added materially to his fortune in so doing. He bought a beautiful home, Gad's Hill, which he had admired excessively in his childhood.

He visited America twice and traveled extensively in Europe, and was one of the best known and most honored men of his time. His death came suddenly in the summer of 1870, and was a shock to the entire world, leaders in politics and society as well as the poor, joining in genuine mourning. Daniel Webster said that Dickens "has done more to ameliorate the condition of the English poor than all the statesmen Great Britain has sent into Parliament." Carlyle called him "the good, the gentle, high-gifted, ever-friendly, noble Dickens—every inch of him an honest man."

The publication of *The Pickwick Papers* was begun in the year he was married and though the first numbers were not remarkably popular the work grew rapidly in public favor and finally with the introduction of Sam Weller came a demand that soon made Dickens independent. From this point on Dickens's career was one of almost

Charles Dickens

unequaled prosperity. *David Copperfield* is the most popular of his novels and its interest is increased by the knowledge that much of its incident is autobiographical. *Oliver Twist*, the story of a poor boy unharmed by the vicious influences of his criminal associates in London, is a powerful and affecting work. *Nicholas Nickleby* is a strong story of the worst class of English boarding schools. *Dombey and Son* is a tale of the thwarted hopes of an ambitious father and the pathetic death of his odd little only son. *Old Curiosity Shop* touches the hearts of its readers through their interest in the wanderings of an old man and his lovely granddaughter. *A Tale of Two Cities* is a powerfully drawn tale of the French Revolution and abounds in thrilling episodes. His *Christmas Stories* are bright and seasonable, *A Christmas Carol* and *The Cricket on the Hearth* being among the best known and most popular.

George Gissing writes thus of him: "For his own fame, Dickens, I think, never puts his genius to better use than in the idealization of English life and character. Whatever in his work may be of doubtful interest to future time, here is its enduring feature. To be truly and profoundly national is great strength in the maker of literature. . . . Of humour he is the very incarnation. Dickens cannot think of his country without a sunny smile. In our hearts we love him for it, and so surely, will the island people for many an age to come."

Dickens in Camp

BRET HARTE

Above the pines the moon was slowly drifting,
The river sang below ;
The dim Sierras, far beyond, uplifting
Their minarets of snow.

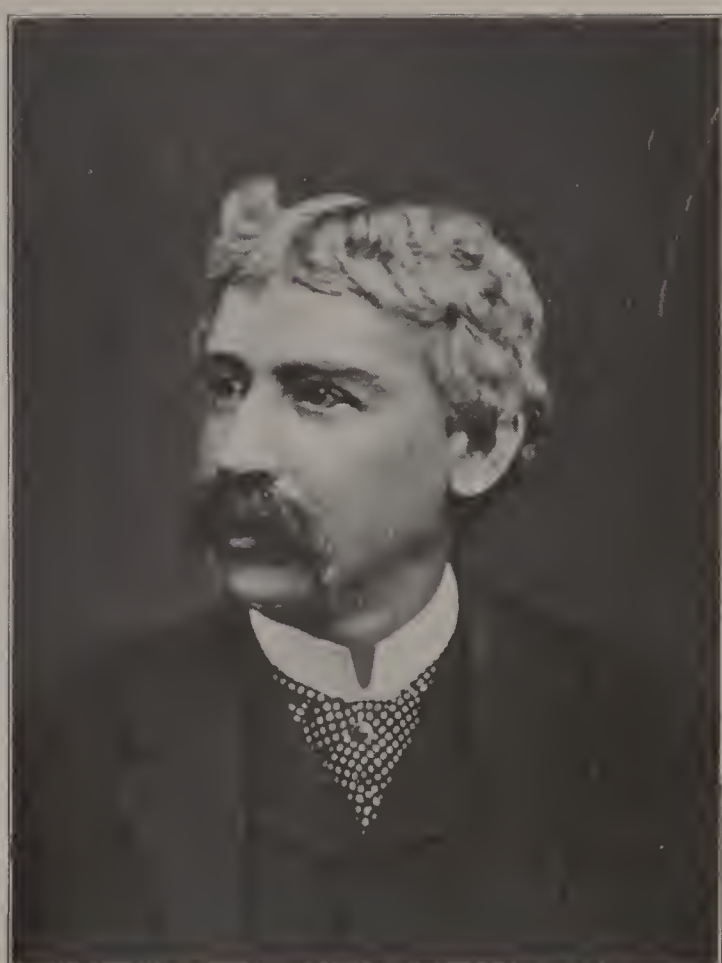
The roaring camp-fire, with rude humor
painted
The ruddy tints of health
On haggard face and form that drooped and
fainted
In the fierce race for wealth ;

Till one arose, and from his pack's scant treas-
ure
A hoarded volume drew,
And cards were dropped from hands of listless
leisure
To hear the tale anew ;

And then, while round them shadows gathered
faster,
And as the firelight fell,
He read aloud the book wherein the Master
Had writ of " Little Nell."

Perhaps 'twas boyish fancy,—for the reader
Was youngest of them all,—

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Boston.



Dickens in Camp

But, as he read, from clustering pine and cedar
A silence seemed to fall ;

The fir-trees, gathering closer in the shadows
Listened in every spray,
While the whole camp, with “ Nell ” on Eng-
lish meadows
Wandered and lost their way.

And so in mountain solitudes — o’ertaken
As by some spell divine
Their cares dropped from them like the
needles shaken
From out the gusty pine.

Lost is that camp, and wasted all its fire ;
And he who wrought that spell ?
Ah, towering pine and stately Kentish spire,
Ye have one tale to tell.

Lost is that camp ! but let its fragrant story
Blend with the breath that thrills
With hop-vines, incense all the pensive glory
That fills the Kentish hills.

And on that grave where English oak and
holly
And laurel wreaths intwine,
Deem it not all a too presumptuous folly,—
This spray of Western pine.

Oliver Goldsmith

1728-1774

To have written a charming novel, a beautiful poem and a successful drama is honor enough for any man. *The Vicar of Wakefield*, *The Deserted Village* and *She Stoops to Conquer* are the three masterpieces upon which rests Goldsmith's title to fame. Into each one of these he weaves some of the incidents and experiences of his life, some trait of character in the people whom he knew. The vicar is a loving sketch of his father in his little curacy in Ireland. The preacher in *The Deserted Village* is another delightful bit of portraiture and the schoolmaster in the same poem is Thomas Byrne or "Paddy" in whose school Goldsmith blundered at his lessons but did achieve some taste for poetry or at least for the jingles his traveled pedagogue could construct. The plot of *She Stoops to Conquer* is based on an amusing incident in his boyhood. At sixteen, being on his way home from school and having a guinea in his pocket he traveled with the air of a lord in waiting. At a little village he inquired in what he conceived to be a magnificent manner for the best inn in the place. A local wag, seizing the opportunity for a joke, directed him to the home of the wealthiest man in the vicinity. Goldsmith rode up, gave orders for the care of his horse and

Oliver Goldsmith

strode into the parlor, making himself entirely at home. The family soon saw the mistake under which the youth was laboring and humored him to the utmost. He ordered his meal, invited the family to sit with him, treated them to an extra fine bottle of wine and finally went off to bed leaving orders for breakfast in the morning. Before he left the place he learned of his blunder and departed in the greatest mortification.

This little story is given because it is so characteristic of the man. He was always in trouble, always blundering in everything he undertook. Everybody laughed at his expense and made him the subject of jests and practical jokes without number. In conversation he wandered about in thoughts that were never logical. His manners were awkward and annoying and he dressed, when he had the means, in the most glaring colors and ridiculous fashion. His squat figure, shambling gait and pock-marked face made one think that Nature had begun the joke his friends were carrying on. When in one of his brief intervals of prosperity he spent his money like a king, heedless of its rapid exhaustion ; when in abject poverty or deeply in debt, as he was most of the time, he resorted to any occupation that would bring in a little money, and late in life he earned most of his subsistence by his pen in the sorriest kind of hackwork.

But he was a jolly, whole-souled fellow, full of drollery and no better pleased than when he could

Oliver Goldsmith

gather about him a group of fun-loving friends for a noisy, almost childish romp. And he had friends in plenty, particularly as he became more famous, and in spite of his poverty they clung faithfully to him. Perhaps Thackeray's characterization is as fair as any, though written long after Goldsmith's death: "To be the most beloved of English writers, what a title that is for a man," and again, "Think of him, reckless, thoughtless, vain, if you like—but merciful, gentle, generous, full of love and pity. His humor delighting us still; his song fresh and beautiful as when first he chanted it; his words in all our mouths; his very weaknesses beloved and familiar; his benevolent spirit seems still to shine on us; to do gentle kindnesses; to succor with sweet charity; to soothe, caress and forgive; to plead with the fortunate for the unhappy and the poor."

His generosity and charity were often as extravagant as his other habits. At Trinity College he was entered as a sizar, a student working for his board who wore as the badge of his servitude a distinguishing uniform. Yet in this trying and humble position he found means to be absurdly generous. A widow and children so worked upon his sympathy that for their benefit he parted with his bedding and some of his own clothing, and his classmates entering the room one cold morning found "Goldy" immersed to his neck among the feathers in the bed-tick which he had opened.

Oliver Goldsmith

He was born in a little village in Ireland, November 10, 1728. He was not a successful scholar as a child nor in college but finally, at the age of twenty-one, graduated the lowest in his class. Until 1764 he was a wanderer in search of a profession trying nearly every occupation that he could find ; then he published *The Traveler* and so began his successful career in literature. For ten years longer he wrote, gaining more friends and greater fame but also increasing his debts and growing morose and despondent in contemplation of them. Then in April of 1774 he died, and his friend and champion, Dr. Johnson, wrote : “ He died of a fever, made, I am afraid, more violent by uneasiness of mind. His debts began to grow heavy, and all his resources were exhausted. Sir Joshua is of the opinion that he owed not less than two thousand pounds. Was ever poet so trusted before ? ” Edmund Burke, his college-mate and life-long friend, wept when he heard the news, and the poor and miserable people whom he had so often befriended bewailed his loss and would not be comforted.

Washington Irving writes thus : “ There are few writers for whom the reader feels such personal kindness as Oliver Goldsmith. The fascinating ease and simplicity of his style ; the benevolence that beams through every page ; the whimsical yet amiable views of human life and human nature ; the mellow, unforced humor blended so happily

Oliver Goldsmith

with good feeling and good sense throughout his writings win their way irresistibly to the affections and carry the author with them. While writers of greater pretensions and more sounding names are suffered to lie upon our shelves, the works of Goldsmith are cherished and laid in our bosoms. We do not quote them with ostentation, but they mingle with our minds ; they sweeten our tempers and harmonize our thoughts ; they put us in good humor with ourselves and with the world ; and in so doing they make us happier and better men."

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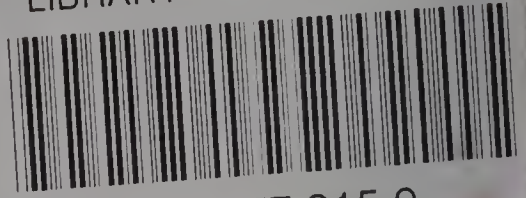
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